



T A L E S

OF THE

PEERAGE AND THE PEASANTRY.

EDITED BY LADY DACRE.

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P R E F A C E.

THE authoress feels much diffidence in sending forth to the world a tale which by its title gives promise of treating not only of history, but of Scottish history ; an act of presumption from which she is anxious to clear herself ; —and at the same time she wishes to re-assure those readers who may not like historical novels from a woman's pen, that she has entered no farther into public affairs, than as they may have influenced the fortunes and feelings of the one admirable woman who forms the subject of the following memoir.

Since in the human heart the same passions and the same emotions are found in all ages, she hopes she has not trespassed beyond the limits assigned to one who is conscious that all she writes bears the stamp of feminine authorship, in attempting the development of a female character, the firmness and tenderness of which may be gathered from Lady Nithsdale's own beautiful letter to her sister.

The foundation of the story of the Hampshire Cottage is strictly true. The appearance, the characters, the sentiments, and the death of the old couple, are entirely

from nature. Their very Christian names have been preserved; and the circumstance of the blind old man feeling too low for the head of the little girl, who had outgrown his recollection, actually occurred to the authoress, when visiting the cottage after a long absence.

For reasons which perhaps may be understood by her friends, she adds, that the tale of *Blanche* was written in the year 1832.

London.
June 26. 1835.

TALES

OF

THE PEERAGE AND THE PEASANTRY.

WINIFRED, COUNTESS OF NITHSDALE.

CHAPTER I.

My father stood for his true king,
Till standing it could do nae mair ;
The day is lost, and so are we, —
Nae wonder mony a heart is sair.

Jacobite Song.

THE sound of the organ pealed through the chapel of the English Augustine convent at Bruges : a bright gleam of sunshine, streaming through the painted window to the south of the altar, shone upon the clouds of incense which arose in silvery folds from the censers ; it shone upon the white-robed assistants, upon the priests, and upon the calm brow of the young nun who had that moment taken the irrevocable vows which separated her from the world—a world of which she knew but little ; but which, from the circumstances in which her family was placed, offered not to her the temptations it usually holds out to youth, beauty, and rank such as hers.

The Lady Lucy Herbert was the fourth daughter of William Marquis of Powis, who, having devoted himself to the cause of James the Second, and accompanied his queen in her flight to France, received from the exiled monarch, as a reward for his uncompromising loyalty, the empty titles of Marquis of Montgomery and Duke of Powis.

James afterwards appointed him steward and chamberlain to his household—offices which, although of small advantage, may have been gratifying to his feelings, as proofs of the

estimation in which he was held by the master to whom he had sacrificed everything.

Upon the Duke of Powis's death, which took place in 1696, his widow placed her two youngest daughters in the English Augustine convent at Bruges; while the three elder remained with her at the melancholy shadow of a court still kept up at St. Germain's.

It was no grief to the widowed mother when she found that the bent of the young Lucy's mind was sincerely and enthusiastically directed towards a religious life. Although the attainder had been reversed, and her son had been restored to the Marquisate of Powis, it was not till some years afterwards that she had ventured to return to England; even then she lived in retirement and privacy. The widow of so zealous an adherent to King James could not be regarded without suspicion; her means were scanty; her elder daughters had not then made the advantageous alliances which they afterwards formed; and joyfully did she hail the vocation which she hoped would secure, to one of her children at least, a peaceful and tranquil existence, secure from any farther vicissitudes of fortune.

But to one person the decision of the Lady Lucy Herbert was a matter of deep and unmixed sorrow. Her younger sister, the Lady Winifred, loved her with all the devotion of a fresh and unpractised heart. They had been early separated from the rest of their family. At the period of their father's death, when their childish hearts had for the first time been made acquainted with grief, they had been thrown entirely on each other for support and consolation.

Though many years had now elapsed, the moment was still fresh in their memories, when their mother, in her mourning habit, with pale cheek and streaming eyes, delivered them over to the care of the friend who was to convey them to Bruges. The sad countenances and black garments of their sisters, and of the few domestics who still remained of their former establishment, coupled with the vague, ill-defined feeling, half resembling fear, half shame, which children experience when they witness grief more intense than their young minds can comprehend, had left a deep impression upon both the youthful pensioners. When first they found themselves in the convent, with none but strangers around them, the timid Winifred clung instinctively to her sister; while Lady Lucy, forced, as

it were, to become the prop and stay of one younger and weaker than herself, acquired at an early age the habit of seeking strength and support from above.

Loving and admiring her sister as did the Lady Winifred, it may excite wonder that she did not imbibe her strict religious notions ; that she also should not have looked forward with joy to the idea of devoting herself to pious seclusion, and thus, at the same time, preserving the society of the being she most loved on earth. But it was not so. On the contrary, she felt her sister's vows as a barrier of separation between them.

Although she had no wish to wander beyond the walls of the little convent garden, though she seldom even went to the parlour grate, and never wished to avail herself of the occasional opportunities which occurred to the pensioners of mixing in society, still she felt an instinctive horror of irrevocable vows, to renounce—they knew not what. It was with a feeling amounting to despair that she witnessed the funeral rites, that she heard the service for the dead, that she saw the black veil dropped between her sister and the world, of whose pains and pleasures they could form no idea. Moreover, these vows for ever precluded the possibility of her seeing their native country in company with that beloved sister ; and in the heart of the Lady Winifred there existed the strong instinctive affection for the land of her forefathers, which the coldest and the most hardened are not wholly without, but which in minds of a more ardent temperament amounts almost to a ruling passion. She had never beheld the British shores, she had never breathed British air, and yet she felt as if England was her home—her natural resting-place.

When first the young girls had been sent to Bruges, an old and faithful servant of the name of Evans had accompanied them. She was a native of Wales, and had been born in the neighbourhood of the ancient seat of the Herbert family, Poole Castle, in Montgomeryshire.

Loyalty to the family of Herbert had grown with her growth and strengthened with her strength, and was only balanced by the attachment to her country, which is generally more enthusiastic in the inhabitants of mountainous districts than of any other.

The young girl had listened for hours together to old

Evans's glowing descriptions of the cloud-capped Snowdon, the green mountains, the smiling valleys, the rapid streams, the wreaths of mist, — all the varied beauties of her own Wales. From the windows of their convent they could descry nothing but the flat and uninteresting country which surrounds Bruges: but when the clouds formed themselves into a thousand fantastic shapes, old Evans would point out to them how one mass resembled such a mountain near their ancestral castle—how another was the very picture of Snowdon when he wore his white cap of clouds, as she familiarly expressed herself. She would describe to them the peculiar customs of Wales—the snowy caps, the small black hats, of the women, — would expatiate on the light form and airy step with which they trod the mountain paths—would picture to them how beautiful were the white sheep dotting the soft green of the steep and swelling hills, till the youthful Lady Winifred's heart would burn within her to flee to the home of her ancestors.

Nor, though Evans afterwards returned to her mistress, the duchess, when she established herself in England, did these impressions fade away.

The nunnery was all composed of English, most of whom had been driven into exile by the adherence of their families to that of Stuart; thence it naturally arose that all their ideas of prosperity, happiness, splendour and gaiety, were blended with the memory of England. These recollections also partook of the colouring thrown around them by the joyousness of youth; so that perhaps in no spot of earth had patriotism a firmer hold on the human heart than in the English Augustine convent at Bruges. There also did King James the Third, as he was ever styled, reign without a rival. To every inhabitant of the convent was his cause endeared by the sacrifice of friends, of property, of rank, or of situation; and all those whose age or disposition inclined them to hope, rather than to despond, looked forward with superstitious confidence to the time when "the king should enjoy his own again."

It was an additional grief to the Lady Winifred that her sister's vows would prevent her ever witnessing the glorious restoration which was to take place at some future and unknown period; and it was with a feeling of desolation keener than any emotion she had experienced since the grief of childhood at her father's death, that she retired for the first time

to her solitary apartment as one of the pensioners ; while her sister—her friend, her companion by day and by night—was now a professed nun, immured within her narrow cell, and henceforward subject to all the rules and regulations of the order.

The Lady Lucy's vocation had been so decided, and her only surviving parent's consent so unhesitating, that her noviciate had been shortened ; and it seemed to Lady Winifred a sudden and violent separation.

During the next year, her thoughts, which could no longer be communicated as they arose in the hourly companionship of sisterhood, turned more frequently than ever towards her native land ; her studies were all of the glorious deeds of England ; she read none but English poets ; she carolled none but English ballads ; and she hailed with joy the intelligence that her eldest sister, the Lady Mary, was united to the eldest son of Carril Viscount Molineux, and that an alliance was in treaty between the Lady Frances and the Earl of Seaforth, for she hoped her mother might wish for her society when her sisters were honourably disposed of in marriage.

Since she had taken the vows, the Lady Lucy had unavoidably been not only less her companion, but moreover the constant practice of religious forms and exercises occupied her mind as well as her time. She was unable to sympathise with Lady Winifred : her lot was cast within her convent walls ; and she would have considered it a vain and sinful indulgence to let her thoughts wander towards scenes or pleasures, which she had renounced. At the age of fifteen, therefore, the Lady Winifred's mind had been thrown back upon itself ; and it gradually acquired a gentle reserve, a mild thoughtfulness, which suited well the cast of her features. The placid brow, and the full white eyelids,—the rounded cheek, which, except when some sudden emotion called up an evanescent bloom, was pale as the white rose consecrated to the Jacobite party,—were not calculated to strike at first sight ; but any one who had once looked upon her, could not choose but look again. The dove-like eyes, the lips so full of expression, the whole form so aristocratic in its mould, so feminine in its movements, so delicate, so fragile,—all were rather like a poet's dream, than a being formed to encounter the chances and changes of this rough work-day world. Her slender throat

gleamed white from the close, narrow mantilla of black silk edged with lace, which, according to the fashion of the time and country, was closely fastened down the front; her soft brown hair was smoothly parted off her brow, and tucked under the little white cap, enclosing the back of the head, which is still worn in the Low Countries, and which formed part of the dress of the young pensioners.

The character, the countenance, the features, and the habit, all seemed in unison with each other.

CHAPTER II.

Hail, Childhood ! lovely age, in thy short race
 Too oft we know our only happy hours,
 With what fond yearnings later we retrace
 Each several step in thy sweet path of flowers.
 The spirit bounding wild, unknowing why,
 And still expectant of new ecstasy —
 The little sorrows that to memory seem
 As 'twere joys undefin'd in some fair dream.

Unpublished Poems.

ONE evening the Lady Winifred was alone in the small and simple apartment of which she was now the sole inhabitant; the fading light had obliged her to relinquish her employment, and she gazed through the narrow grated window as the sun sank behind the bank of purple clouds which, in low flat countries, so frequently accompany the decline of day. She thought on old Rachael Evans's descriptions of her home, and she remained lost in fanciful imaginings, conjuring the masses of vapour into the forms of mountains which she had never beheld, when she was roused from her meditations by the entrance of the sister portress, who came to announce to her that a messenger from England had arrived, and to summon her to the parlour grate.

What were her joy and surprise at recognising old Evans herself, who, with a trusty servant, was sent to convey her in safety to London, where she would meet her mother, the Duchess of Powis, as she was called by all her immediate dependants, although the title conferred upon her husband by James the Second was not allowed to her son at the court of Queen Anne.

The Lady Winifred listened with even fresh delight to all which Rachael Evans could impart respecting her family and her country, though she could not but express her surprise that her mother should so suddenly command her to her presence.

“Your lady mother may have her reasons,” replied the old woman, with a mysterious and important air; “and it is likely his gracious majesty himself, (Heaven bless and restore him to his own!) may also have his reasons for wishing you should not follow your sister’s example.

“The king! He cannot surely take any thought of what my fate may be!”

“It is not for me to make so bold as to dive into a king’s counsels; but it would not be fitting for all the heads of noble Catholic families and true Jacobites to be intermarrying with the daughters of crop-eared Whigamoors, as many of the young lords have done of late. If all the beautiful young ladies of loyal families were to take the veil, as the Lady Lucy has done, it would not be the better for the true cause. Your fair sister, the Lady Anne, is about to be married to the Viscount Carrington; and there may be other nobles as great, or greater, whom King James may also wish to see attached to his cause, rather than withdrawn from it, by the lady whom they may chance to marry.”

Lady Winifred was half alarmed at Rachael Evans’s insinuations. Love and marriage were topics of conversation interdicted by the elder nuns, and subjects on which she had never wittingly allowed her thoughts to dwell. Yet she could not but collect from various expressions which Evans let drop, that some alliance, by which the Jacobite cause might be strengthened, was in contemplation for her.

Her thoughts were all duty, submission, and obedience, both towards her mother and her king; but her pure and ardent soul recoiled from the idea of being condemned to love and honour one of whom she knew nothing. She questioned Evans more closely, and extracted from her that Colonel Hook had been despatched with credentials from the court of St. Germain’s, for the purpose of ascertaining the situation, numbers and ability of King James’s adherents in Scotland; that he had reported the Earl of Nithsdale to be

a nobleman of much weight and consideration in the southern counties, and the head of a Jacobite family ; and that he was considered by the Chevalier de St. George as a person whom it was of great importance to attach firmly to his cause, by uniting him to a lady of undoubted loyalty.

The Lady Winifred received this intelligence with tears and sorrow. The notion of resistance to the wishes of her superiors never crossed her mind as within the scope of possible events ; but the prospect which unfolded itself before her seemed to her simple, yet ardent imagination, awful in the extreme.

“ Have you ever seen the Earl of Nithsdale ? ” she timidly inquired, after the long silence which succeeded Rachael Evans’s developement of the views entertained with regard to her.

“ No, my sweet young lady,” replied Evans ; “ but you need not harbour a fear that he is other than a good and a noble gentleman. There never was a Whig nor a traitor among any of the Maxwells of Caerlaverock. Was it not his ancestor, the noble Sir Eustace, who was as true to King Robert Bruce, as your own blessed father was to his king ? and rather than that the enemy should have a chance of turning it into a garrison for themselves, did he not, with his own hands, assist in demolishing his fair castle of Caerlaverock ? The king gave him twenty-two pounds in money for this piece of service ; and though that sounds little enough in these days, they say it was then thought a great sum of money. It was his ancestor, Lord Robert, who was killed at the battle of Flodden, fighting by King James’s side. They always were a noble family, and true to their lawful sovereign. It was the first earl who spent all his princely fortune in the wars of King Charles the Martyr ; — nor would he surrender his castles of Caerlaverock and Thrieve, till he had received his majesty’s own letters commanding him to do so. It may be a bold speech for me who am but a servant — though, I am proud to say, a trusted one — but I think a young lady should esteem herself honoured to ally herself with one descended from such worthy parentage.”

The Lady Winifred sighed : she also set a high value upon an honourable and noble lineage ; that a woman should match herself beneath her station appeared to her a shameful degra-

dation. The idea of a Jacobite intermarrying with a Whigamoor was as revolting to her imagination as to Rachael Evans's ; yet she would fain have learned something more of her future husband's character, his age, and his appearance.

"But, Evans," she replied, "it sometimes happens that persons of noble birth are mean and sordid in their minds, and such that it would be difficult to love and honour them, as a wife should love and honour her husband, and as I have heard you say my mother loved and honoured my father. Oh ! I could tell you a sad tale which one of our nuns has often told to me, how a friend of hers was married to a great duke, who was of the oldest and noblest family in France."

"And was he not noble in mind, as such a great person should ever be ?"

"I will repeat it all to you, as sister Margaret has so often told it to me, and you will not wonder at my fears : — She was brought up in the same convent as Eugénie de St. Mesnil : they were friends from childhood ; and when Eugénie was removed to her father's house, previous to her betrothment, she begged that her friend might be permitted to accompany her. One morning they were all dressed in their most brilliant apparel, — sister Margaret says that poor Eugénie looked more like an angel than a woman, — the relations were assembled, and in the adjoining apartment waited the notaries and the family of the bridegroom. The folding doors opened : — sister Margaret kept close to Eugénie, who stole a fearful glance towards the gentlemen at the farther end of the room. She whispered softly to sister Margaret 'she only hoped it was not he who wore the blue and silver !' The future bride and bridegroom were now summoned to sign their names to the parchments. Eugénie advanced, and from among the gentlemen she indeed saw him who wore the blue and silver step forward, and it was he who signed his name with hers. Sister Margaret says, that to her dying day she shall never forget the expression of despair in poor Eugénie's countenance. At that moment she resolved she would profess herself a nun ; and the very day which saw Eugénie become a miserable wife, sister Margaret returned to her convent. She was soon afterwards removed hither, that she might take the veil among others of her own country. — Alas ! alas ! how often have I wished to see my native land ; and now how much rather

would I embrace the fate of sister Margaret, than that of Eugénie de St. Mesnil, if I could do so without failing in duty to my mother !”

“ My dear young lady, you should not listen to these love tales ; they are almost as bad for young people as reading idle romances and songs.”

The Lady Winifred could not suppress a smile. “ Nay, dear Evans, I do not think my tale has been a tale of love,” she replied.

“ I dare say sister Margaret’s French friend was very happy after a while, when she became accustomed to the strange duke.”

“ Alas ! I believe not ” — and the young Winifred shook her head. “ Sister Margaret never would tell me any more of what befel her. She says poor Eugénie is at rest, and bids me ask no farther of her history. It was a very sad one, she always adds ; so sad, that she rejoiced when she heard of her friend’s death !”

CHAPTER III.

You call this weakness ! — It is strength,
I say ; the parent of all honest feeling !
Who loves not his country, can love nothing.

The Two Foscari.

DEAR as her sister had ever been to the Lady Winifred, never had she seemed so dear as at the moment of parting from her for ever : never had she so loved the convent garden, which had hitherto been her only place of recreation ; the cloisters, through which she had so often wandered in the twilight ; the chapel, where she had so regularly joined her companions in devotion. It was with a sensation resembling awe, that she bade adieu to the tranquil retreat where she had passed a youth unruffled by any grief, if not enlivened by many pleasures, to enter upon a career which was destined to call forth feelings as pure and as ardent as ever informed mortal clay ; feelings which, whatever might prove their intensity in after years, now lay dormant under an exterior almost child-like in its placidity.

To her unpractised eyes every object was new, every sight

interesting. The very streets of Bruges were not familiar to her, for she had seldom passed the portals of the convent. The town appeared to her interminable. So many houses, with their high roofs and their pointed gables ; the innumerable people, who hurried past each other in every direction, intent on business or on pleasure ; the various vehicles which crowded the streets ; — all confused her, and she forgot for the moment the grief of parting from her sister, the joyful prospect of seeing her mother, her curiosity concerning her native land, and even her dread of the husband to whom she was destined.

Uninteresting as was the country between Bruges and Ostend, she looked with pleasure at the fields so brightly green, at the hedgerows of willow, at the luxuriant crops ; at the industrious peasant who still toiled at his daily labour, or at the noisy boors who were enjoying the relaxation of their favourite game of bowls ; at the stout and active boys, who almost excited her mirth by their antics as they ran with incredible speed by the side of the carriage.

The extreme flatness of the country prevents the traveller from becoming aware how near he is to the ocean, till he finds himself almost upon the shore. Though overpowered, her first emotion was mixed with disappointment. When standing on a level with the sea, the eye embraces so much smaller a range than when placed on higher ground, that she did not receive that impression of its boundless expanse which she had anticipated. Yet the sight of the ocean awakened other emotions. She almost felt as if it were part of her native country. She had imbued and fed her mind with the history of England's glories — of England's triumphs. She felt as if the waters were all tributary to the Island Queen ; she knew that the navies of England maintained the empire of the sea, and she hailed with a feeling of love and reverence the waves which washed the white cliffs of Albion — the waves which bore the British fleets to conquest and to glory.

It was not till on board the vessel which was to convey her to her long-loved though stranger home, and that the first surprise had in some degree subsided, that her thoughts were again able to dwell on her own future fate.

After a long and thoughtful silence, she thus addressed Evans : —

“It would be impossible that a person who was good should fail to love her husband, would it not?”

“A woman’s first duty, madam, is towards her husband.”

“Then I trust I shall assuredly love the Earl of Nithsdale,” she replied with a brightened countenance; “for when my confessor parted from me, he bestowed on me this little crucifix, which was brought from Our Lady’s holy convent at Einsiedlin, and giving me his benediction, he told me I had been ever a good girl, and that he felt confident I should prove myself a virtuous woman. I have felt happier from that moment; for since Father Albert says so, I suppose I must prove virtuous, and fulfil my duties, whatever they may be.”

“I wish her grace, your honoured mother, were present,” answered Evans, “to hear you speak so beautifully and so properly!”

“But if I should not love Lord Nithsdale, I shall be sinful!” exclaimed Lady Winifred with a look of terror.

“Young ladies’ minds should not be turned upon such subjects as love: it is a word which does not befit a maiden’s lips,” replied Rachael Evans, with an expression of severity in her countenance.

The Lady Winifred was silent and abashed. She feared to have been unmaidenly in her questions, and she buried within her own bosom the emotions which she could not subdue.

It was long before she again ventured to address her companion. She found that years had not softened the old woman’s character. She was faithfully devoted to the objects of her loyalty—the Herbert family, the exiled Stuarts, and after them the mountains of Wales; she did not imagine that any doubts or scruples could lawfully interfere where duty towards either of the first-mentioned objects was in question.

The Lady Winifred sat watching the waves as they dashed one after another against the side of the vessel; she wondered within herself to find that the accomplishment of her constant and early wish—the prospect of so soon setting her foot on British land—should not give her more pleasure. She wished she had remained in ignorance of her mother’s intentions respecting her, and she felt a certain awe of that mother stealing upon her, from finding old Evans so much more stern and

serious than when she had parted from her. Since that period, Evans, who was a privileged person, had been entrusted with many of the secrets of the Jacobite party, and had occasionally been of service in conveying intelligence between the Duchess of Powis and her friends. She had consequently become more and more devoted to the cause, and would have resented any difficulty thrown in the way of a Jacobite plan as an injury offered to herself. She feared Lady Winifred might not blindly submit to the decrees of her mother, and she felt almost displeased with her for even wishing to know to whom she was destined. But the Lady Winifred was so thoroughly imbued with the principles of submission and duty, that resistance to parental authority seemed to her impossible: yet her submission would have been that of a mind in which the sense of duty was stronger even than the warm and ardent feelings of which she in after life gave such signal proofs, not the submission of weakness or of indifference.

At length the white cliffs of Albion actually greeted her eyes, and she once more forgot herself and all that might await her. What a strange and strong tie is that which binds the soul to the land of one's forefathers! Her heart went forth towards the very earth: strange as it was to her, it seemed familiar: and as the vessel glided up the stately river, and passed the ships which bore the riches and the arms of England to every region of the habitable globe, she exulted in the power and the wealth of her country.

They passed the Tower of London; and little did the fair young creature, who gazed with youthful curiosity upon the antique edifice, anticipate what she would one day endure within those walls! Little did she think, when the Traitor's Gate was pointed out to her awe-struck and wondering eyes, that he in whom her own existence was wound up would one day mount those dreary steps, and pass that ominous portal.

The duchess's coach was in waiting to convey the Lady Winifred to her mother's presence — the Duchess of Powis having undertaken a journey to London purposely to receive her daughter: she usually resided in retirement at her son's castle in Wales. She did not wish to excite suspicion by openly refusing to attend the court of Queen Anne; yet she could not bring herself to pay the accustomed homage expected of one of her exalted rank, when, in truth, she was

devoted to the cause of the Chevalier de St. George — when she looked upon Queen Anne as an usurper, though, as many others at that time did, she looked upon her in the light of an unwilling usurper.

Queen Anne was known to speak with kindness and pity of her exiled brother ; and she was not regarded by the Jacobites with the same horror they had entertained towards Mary, whose want of filial piety afforded her enemies a never-failing topic for eloquent invective.

As the heavy coach, with its ponderous horses, conveyed Lady Winifred to that part of the town where the Duchess of Powis had for the time established herself, her feelings were too much excited to remark upon the long, muddy, and unpaved streets, which contrasted so strangely with the extreme brilliancy of the shops, and which usually called forth the astonishment of those who visited London for the first time.

At length she was ushered into the presence of her who was at once a parent and a stranger. She knelt at her feet ; — it was her mother's hand which was placed upon her head — it was her mother's voice which pronounced a blessing over her. The venerable lady embraced her, while a tear shone beneath her eyelid. She looked with tenderness upon her child — her youngest child, but it was a tenderness mixed with reserve and with habitual stateliness. Her mind had been of late years turned to matters of secrecy and importance, and her countenance had acquired an expression which, while it did not amount to sternness, was nearly enough allied to it to awe her young daughter rather than to attract her. Her silver hair was parted smoothly from her forehead, while a black silk hood, from beneath which appeared a close cap of the finest lace, formed her head-dress. Her stature was tall, and remarkably erect. She moved and looked the daughter of a long line of ancestors — the widow of the true and loyal Duke of Powis — the mother of a race of nobles !

The Lady Winifred was presented to many of her relations ; and to her sisters, the Ladies Seaforth and Carrington, and the Lady Mary Molineux.

All were delighted with the timid and graceful girl, whose heart was so ready to receive them, as if she had ever been nurtured among them ; while the freshness of her mind, her wonder at all she saw, and her determination to love and to

admire every thing English, rendered her as interesting as she was attaching.

The Duchess of Powis did not devote many days to making her daughter acquainted with her kinsfolk, but shortly set forth upon her journey to Wales; and at length the Lady Winifred's ardent desire to gaze on real mountains was likely to be gratified. In the agitations of the last few days, and the anticipated delight of visiting Wales, the destined husband had been forgotten. Her mother had not alluded to the subject; and with the natural buoyancy of early youth, she gave herself up to the enjoyment of the moment, and would not look beyond the present happiness.

CHAPTER IV.

Peace, brother, peace! Speak not irreverently
Of maiden bashfulness; it were to slander
The breath of morn—the dew-drop on the bud—
The thousand, thousand evanescent sweets
That mix in Nature's earliest incense.

Unpublished Poems.

For the first few miles of her journey every step of the way called forth from the Lady Winifred fresh expressions of delight; at every inequality of the ground, she inquired whether these were yet the mountains of Wales, although at the same time she would have been disappointed had she received an answer in the affirmative, for her imagination had pictured something far more wild and sublime.

By degrees her questions became fewer, her exclamations less frequent. It was not that her wonder, or her delight, decreased; it was not that her mother was unkind; but there was no sympathy between the artless child, (for she was scarcely more than a child in experience,) and the aged and serious women, who had arrived nearly at the end of a career, in which they had witnessed the overthrow of the monarch to whom they were attached, the destruction of the religion they professed, and the blasting of the hopes of youth. All that remained of warmth of feeling in the Duchess of Powis was concentrated in the desire of once more seeing a Catholic king upon the throne; all the energies of a lofty and commanding spirit were devoted to that one object.

The innocent wonder, the simple delight of her young daughter, would have afforded to many a subject of pleasing interest : but her thoughts were upon weightier matters ; and to a person engaged in secret negotiations for the restoration of a dynasty, such artless graces possessed no charm. The Lady Winifred's personal attractions were such that there was no reason to fear the Earl of Nithsdale would not gladly fulfil the engagement which was desired by his king ; from the gentleness and duty of her child, no resistance to her wishes could be anticipated, and she was satisfied.

The duchess journeyed with her own horses, and from the state of the roads in those days there was leisure during their progress for much reflection. By the time the dark blue outlines of the mountains became visible, the Lady Winifred had learned to subdue her raptures, and to resume the staid and sober demeanour which had been usual to her in the convent, but which had in some measure given way under the excitement of her first arrival in England.

When once established in the castle, of which Lord Powis considered his mother as the mistress, and where he himself only occasionally resided, the Lady Winifred found her life nearly as monotonous as it had been at Bruges. She had the pleasure of looking upon the beauties of nature, it is true ; but it was only from a distance. The duchess would have considered it improper and undignified for her daughter to have strayed beyond the terrace which surrounded two sides of the castle, or the pleasaunce, which, having been neglected during the years that the Herbert family passed in exile, now rather resembled a straggling orchard, and, although superior in extent, was very inferior in neatness and cultivation to the trim garden of the Augustinian convent at Bruges.

There were moments when the Lady Winifred looked back with regret to her convent life — when she thought with painful tenderness of her beloved sister — when she keenly felt the want of congenial companions.

Her mother, serious and abstracted, would sometimes pass whole hours in unbroken silence. Seated in her carved arm-chair of black oak, with its high back and its velvet cushions, she industriously plied her needle at the elaborate piece of carpet-work which had occupied her fingers, though not her thoughts, for the last twelve years ; while the Lady Winifred

as patiently toiled at the delicate embroidery, in the execution of which persons brought up in foreign convents are usually so skilful.

An airing in the ponderous coach, through roads which would now be deemed impassable, constituted the only break in the routine of their life.

But even then, there was no one to whom she might exclaim upon the beauties of the Dovey, the rich interchange of meadow and mountain, wood and fields of waving grain, or admire the more majestic glories of Cader Idris ; which, although inferior in height to Snowdon, strikes the eye as being more lofty, from its more abrupt and bolder outline.

The daughter of Rachael Evans had been appointed as the personal attendant of the Lady Winifred, and notwithstanding the difference in their birth, their condition, and their education, it was not long before the high-born Lady Winifred Herbert discovered in the humble Amy Evans a spirit as simple, as ardent, as unsophisticated, as her own.

Their young hearts warmed to each other. The want of sympathy in the other persons who surrounded her naturally led the Lady Winifred to an unconstrained communication with her waiting-woman ; which, had Amy's mind been stamped in a common mould, might have produced disrespect or familiarity, but which, with a soul so true, so frank, as that of the Welsh girl, inspired the enthusiastic devotion which subsequently proved invaluable to her lady.

The Lady Winifred was one evening summoned from her walk upon the terrace, where she was calmly listening to the tinkling of the distant sheep-bells, and watching the sun as it gradually sank behind the blue mountains.

It was Rachael Evans, whose tall and stately form approached through the twilight. From the circumstances before alluded to, she had been associated with those in a class above her, till she had acquired manners, as well as sentiments, beyond her station. She now wished to prepare the Lady Winifred's mind for the unresisting compliance to her mother's wishes, which she knew would be expected from her ; but she was too really well-bred ever to lose, in the freedom of the trusted companion, the respect due from a menial to her superiors—while at the same time the affection she felt for one whom she had nursed in infancy, though it

tempered the sternness of her character, was but secondary to her devotion to her lady, and the cause her lady had espoused.

There was respect, affection, and decision in Rachael Evans's tone as she thus accosted Lady Winifred:—"Her grace requests your presence in the oak-chamber, madam: she has matters of high importance to communicate to your ladyship. You remember, my dear young lady, what I once told you, that your honoured mother had chosen for you a gentleman of noble lineage and undoubted honour; and I trust that my dear young mistress will show herself, as I know she is, a dutiful and grateful child."

"Oh, Evans! you do not mean—that my mother is really about to speak to me of the gentleman you mentioned—now!—this evening?"

The Lady Winifred clasped her hands and trembled.

"Yes, madam, assuredly is she. And from whom can a young lady more properly receive the first intimation of her approaching marriage, than from her parent—her only remaining parent? But I thought I would prepare you for what you were about to hear, lest you should at first look strange upon her grace; and you know full well that the lady duchess is not one of those who could brook an undutiful word, or a look of disobedience. Ever since his grace's death—Heaven rest his soul!—my mistress has been used to rule everything; and nobly has she contended with adverse fortune, and well is she entitled to observance and respect from all around her!"

"Certainly, Evans. Full well do I know that it is the first duty of a child to honour and obey her parents: still I cannot but feel uneasy and alarmed."

"Compose yourself, my sweet child. I know you are dutiful, although somewhat timid. Do not linger on the way, but hasten to her grace; she is in the oak-room,—and see! the tapers are already lighted. Hasten, lest the supper may be served, and her grace may not be pleased if you are absent."

The Lady Winifred followed old Rachael's injunctions, neither did she venture to question her any farther. Though kinder and less stern than when she had formerly opened the subject, still Rachael's manner was firm and uncommunicative, and she feared to show a curiosity which might be deemed

forward or unbecoming. In ages and in countries where marriages are arranged and contracted by parental authority, love, whether lawful or unlawful, is equally treated as a feeling improper to be indulged.

With trembling hands the Lady Winifred turned the lock of the high and massive door. The apartment was brilliant from the wax tapers in heavy silver sconces which illuminated it. The venerable lady was content to live in retirement; but though she inhabited only a few rooms of the rambling old castle, in those she would not dispense with any of the state to which her youth had been accustomed.

She was, as usual, employed upon her carpet-work. How many serious and lofty thoughts—how many ambitious, proud, and melancholy feelings—how many sad and tender recollections—how many aspiring and loyal hopes—had passed through the mind of the noble embroideress, while her fingers had been employed in tracing the unconscious leaves and fruits!—if unrolled, it would have been to her as a journal of past thoughts and feelings!

The Lady Winifred gently closed the door behind her, and timidly approached her mother.

“I sent Rachael Evans to bid you hither, my child,” said the duchess, as Lady Winifred stood before her: “be seated, Winifred; I have much to say to you. I have just received a letter from your brother, informing me that he will be here to-morrow by mid-day, and with him the Earl of Nithsdale, who accompanies him from Scotland. He is a nobleman of undoubted loyalty and gallant bearing, and one to whom I shall feel proud and happy in committing the welfare of my child. He is to become your husband, my dear Winifred; your king, your surviving parent, and your brother, have chosen him for you: so prepare yourself to receive him with such maidenly attention as may be fitting in one of your noble birth.”

The Lady Winifred answered not; but the tears stood in her eyes, and at length flowed down her cheeks.

“What mean these tears?” resumed the duchess, when she observed them.

“Oh, nothing, madam; only the news is sudden, and I scarcely know ——”

“You scarcely know what, my child?”

"I scarcely know how I should comport myself on such an occasion. Is he—is the Earl of Nithsdale—a person—such a person—is he a good man?" the Lady Winifred faltered forth.

"Assuredly is he. Does my daughter think I would wed her to a person who was mean in character—a heretic, a coward, or a profligate? No; not even to fulfil the commands of my king would I peril the immortal soul of my child!" answered the lady, with a proud reliance on her own integrity of purpose.

"Oh, no! my honoured mother, I never imagined such a thing: only——" but she durst frame no other question. If in her secret bosom she wished to know whether he was in outward appearance, and in manners, such as might win a youthful heart, she scarcely ventured to acknowledge to herself any anxiety upon subjects concerning which both her mother and Rachael Evans had appeared to consider it unbecoming in her to inquire.

The Duchess of Powis presently resumed. "The young earl" (the word young was not lost upon Lady Winifred) "was at Bruges when your sister Lucy took the veil; indeed, he has not been many months returned from Flanders. When there, he was fortunate enough to obtain a secret interview with our gracious king."

"Did he indeed?" asked Lady Winifred with eagerness; for the loyalty in which she had been nurtured invested every thing that appertained to the exiled monarch with interest in her eyes.

"Yes; it was when King James was serving in the King of France's army. His retinue, alas! was scarcely equal to that of a private gentleman; and his gracious majesty was suffering so severely from ill-health, that he was shortly obliged to return to St. Germain's; but he received the earl most graciously, and accepted his homage and devotion. Colonel Hook, who has since been sent from St. Germain's to Scotland, has been for some time in communication with the earl, and it is through him that the king has expressed a wish that the loyal family of the Maxwells should form an alliance with that of the Herberts."

The servant now entered to announce that supper was served, and the Lady Winifred offered her supporting arm to conduct

her mother into the adjoining apartment, although perhaps at that moment the daughter more needed a stay to her footsteps than the parent, who was pleased and satisfied at the successful termination which she anticipated to the plans she had long been forming.

The repast was silent. The Lady Winifred felt as if the gray-headed butler and the two serving-men must all be aware that she was a destined bride, and she blushed for the agitation which prevented her being able to touch any of the viands placed before her.

It was the custom of the ladies to retire to rest soon after supper; and when the young girl had carefully folded and arranged all belonging to her mother's work, and had dutifully lighted her to her apartment, the duchess gave her a more tender and fondling embrace than was usual, according to the formal manners of the time, and the cold bearing of the person we have described.

This temporary unbending on the part of the parent roused all the smothered feelings in the bosom of the daughter.

"Give me your blessing, dearest mother," she exclaimed, with an emotion her mother had never yet witnessed: "Bless me before I leave you, and pray that I may make a good wife to the stranger I am to marry."

"I do indeed bless you, my good child; nor can I doubt that you will prove the virtuous wife that is a crown of glory to her husband. None of your race and lineage have failed, nor will you, my gentle daughter. Heaven bless you, and preserve you, my Winifred, to be an honour to your family and to your sex!"

Amy Evans was surprised, when her young lady had closed the door of her sleeping-apartment, to see her suddenly throw herself into a chair and burst into convulsive sobs. She was greatly alarmed, and prescribed such simple nostrums for hysterics as occurred to her. She knelt by her side; she patted her lady's hands; she bathed her temples with distilled waters.

"I am not ill, dear Amy! I shall be better in a moment; but — but, I am going to be married, Amy!"

"Indeed, my lady! You do not say so? I hope it is to a worthy gentleman."

"Oh, yes: my mother says he is in every respect most worthy, and was almost angry with me that I could doubt it."

"And is he young?"

"I think the word young escaped my mother's lips."

"And handsome, I hope?"

"Nay, of that I know nothing."

"How! my lady, not know?"

"I have never seen him, and these are questions it would not have been fitting for me to ask."

"Oh! I thank my kind stars I am not a lady," exclaimed Amy, "to be married to some ugly old man one knows nothing of."

"Alas! is he indeed old and ugly? Oh, Amy! would I were an humble country-girl! But," she added, after a moment's pause, with a gentle dignity and firmness of resolve — "but, being what I am, I must do that which my station requires. I must obey my mother, even though he may be as old and as disagreeable as you say."

"Nay, my dear, dear lady, do not look so sad! I know not that he is old and ugly; I was only thinking it would be a sore trial to be married to some old stranger, when — when ——" It was now Amy's turn to blush, and to look confused, for she was betrothed to the son of a tenant of the Duke of Powis's. "But with you, my lady, it is quite different. Who knows but your future husband may prove as dear to you, as — as — David is to me?" she added, half-blushing, but half-smiling also, for her engagement was an acknowledged thing.

"Perhaps you may have seen him, Amy? He is a friend of my brother's, — the Earl of Nithsdale."

"No, my sweet lady, I have never seen him; but the name is a marvellous well-sounding name; so do not look sorrowful, but hope for the best. If your lady mother has chosen him, and if your brother loves him, why should not you love him also?"

"And the king, Amy — the king approves of him, and confides in him; and the king wishes for this union!"

"His majesty!" exclaimed Amy with awe; "then it must be right! And yet," she added, "I know not how it would fare with me, if the king was to send his commands from beyond the seas, that David was not to be my husband, but that

I was to marry some one he chose for me ! Ah, well ! it is all as it should be ! You are a lady, and I am a country maiden ; and it is all for the best ! ”

CHAPTER V.

His soul is tost sweet hopes and doubts between,
And you might almost 'mid these flutterings trace
A dear assurance to be lov'd by her ;
For silence is Love's best interpreter.

He might, besides, as she drew near, observe
O'er all her face a deep vermilion dye ;
And short and broken, check'd by cold reserve,
Her accents of condoling courtesy.

Translation from the Italian of Pulci.

THE morrow came. The Lady Winifred was pale, more pale than usual. Her hands trembled as she toiled at her many-coloured silks ; more time was spent in disentangling them than in embroidering. Her heart beat at every sound : she started every moment. But the duchess was in the habit of veiling all emotions under an exterior of imperturbable composure, and proceeded with the eternal carpet-work without making one false stitch, although she might feel some inward agitation at the prospect of presenting her daughter to her future husband, and some joy at that of seeing her son, who had been many months absent.

Once or twice she turned her eyes upon her daughter, and secretly regretted that she seemed pale and languid, and she even fancied she could perceive traces of tears upon her cheek ; but she knew that the marriage was arranged, and she was certain that a shade more or less of beauty in his betrothed would not affect the ultimate success of the negotiations with the Earl of Nithsdale. She was confident that the Herbert family was too noble to be slighted ; and she doubted not that the gentleness and virtues of Winifred must attach her husband, even should her personal attractions fail to strike him at first.

The Lady Winifred, meantime, thought not of her own appearance. She imagined that Lord Nithsdale was as inevitably bound to her as she was to him ; and her agitation at the notion of first beholding him, and her longing desire to

see the brother, who was equally a stranger to her, swallowed up all personal feelings.

The apartment already described as that usually inhabited by the Duchess of Powis was a corner room, and was lighted by windows on two sides. Lady Winifred habitually established herself in one of those which looked towards the east ; it commanded the most extensive view ; and, moreover, when gazing in that direction, her thoughts o'erleaped the space between, and wandered towards the friends and playmates of her childhood. From the other, to the south, could be seen the approach of travellers from some distance. If her brother only had been expected, probably she would have placed herself so as to command a view of the road, but now she scarcely ventured to turn her eyes that way : she sat with her face bent low over her frame, almost breathlessly listening to every sound.

The castle clock struck three. The Duchess of Powis wondered her visitors had not yet arrived. She desired her daughter to look out towards the southern entrance, and tell her whether she saw any one approaching.

" Yes, madam ! " answered Lady Winifred, in a voice scarcely audible.

" Well, my child, whom and what do you see ? "

" There are four horsemen, madam, riding quickly up the hill. "

" Then I imagine we may order dinner to be served, " answered the mother, who was accustomed to the strictest punctuality. " How near are they ? "

" They are even now entering the castle gate ; " and Lady Winifred sunk on the window-seat, while her eyes became so dizzy she could scarcely distinguish anything farther. A vague indistinct recollection of sister Margaret's French friend, Eugénie de St. Mesnil, and of the betrothed in blue and silver — a confused thought of Amy's expression, " old and ugly, " ran through her brain — when her mother bade her ring the bell : she obeyed ; and rallying herself, she returned to the embroidery, which she hoped would assist her in recovering from her confusion.

In a few moments footsteps were heard in the adjoining apartment ; the clank of boots — the sound of voices. The door opened ; and the Marquis, or, as he was more usually

called, the Duke of Powis, advanced to his mother, and having kissed her hand, was folded in her maternal embrace ; while Lady Winifred, having risen mechanically from her seat, stood pale and immovable behind her.

“ My sister ? ” inquired the duke.

“ Our dear Winifred,” replied the duchess ; and, to her utter surprise and confusion, the Lady Winifred suddenly found herself embraced by a bluff, gay, honest-looking man, who was indeed her brother.

“ And now, my lady mother, you must allow me to present to you my friend and companion, the Earl of Nithsdale, who has been my host for the last three weeks, which I have passed with him at Terreagles.”

The Earl of Nithsdale, who had hitherto kept in the background, now advanced with a graceful and respectful bow to make his obeisances to the duchess, who then presented him to her daughter.

The Lady Winifred, startled by her brother’s greeting, blushed rosy-red. Lord Nithsdale bowed still lower than to the duchess, and for a moment gazed upon the fair young thing before him, but as quickly withdrew his glance ; for, with the nice feeling of a refined mind, he perceived, although her eyes were not for one moment raised from the ground, that she quivered beneath his gaze.

The parent might have been satisfied with the personal attractions of her daughter at this moment. The surprise and the excitement had summoned a bloom that gave her all the brilliancy which at times she might require. The extreme purity of her expression, and bashfulness of her demeanour, suited well with the embarrassing situation in which she was placed.

The mid-day repast was announced. The duchess was handed by Lord Nithsdale ; while the Duke of Powis gave his arm to his shrinking sister, who, shy and trembling, scarcely ventured to slightly touch it, alarmed to find herself on so familiar a footing with any man, even though a brother — she who had scarcely spoken to one of the other sex, except good Father Albert.

Had the soft innocent eyes of young Winifred never yet been raised ? Had she not yet beheld the face of her future lord ? When first the door had opened, she had stolen a fur-

tive glance — had seen enough to convince her that the person who accompanied her brother, if indeed he were the Earl of Nithsdale, was neither old nor ugly. But from that moment forward they had been riveted to the ground.

The dinner was dull and constrained — how should it have been otherwise? Though the Duke of Powis exerted himself to the utmost, and told many lively anecdotes concerning his exploits when deer-stalking in the Highlands, or salmon-fishing in the Lowlands, his unassisted efforts could not succeed in sustaining the conversation. The venerable duchess was always stately in her manners: she had lived almost entirely out of the world, and had none of the small talk of the day. Lady Winifred, of course, could not be expected to speak. Lord Nithsdale, although he had read much, travelled far, and although he had seen much of the world in general, felt that in his situation, also, light and flippant conversation would be out of season; and upon subjects of nearer interest, of deeper anxiety, whether personal or political, they could none of them touch while surrounded by attendants.

When, however, they adjourned to the pleasaunce, they were able to communicate more freely.

The Duke of Powis imparted to the duchess all that Colonel Hook had told them of the Chevalier's hopes and fears; of all the promises of assistance which were held out to him by Louis the Fourteenth; of all the pledges of devoted attachment to the cause which he had received from the various nobles and lairds of Scotland.

The Earl of Nithsdale qualified his friend's hopeful view of the case, by mentioning the divisions which, in consequence of Colonel Hook's mismanagement, had arisen between the more zealous partizans, including the Dukes of Athol and of Perth, who were for at once receiving the king without any conditions, and the Duke of Hamilton, the Earl Marishal, and others, who adopted more moderate principles.

The Lady Winifred cowered close to her mother; but once or twice, attracted by the deep, low, earnest tones of his voice, as he feelingly deplored these disunions, which he feared might prove the destruction of all their hopes, she found her eyes involuntarily turn towards the speaker; and once — once only — he surprised them fixed upon him.

Confused and shocked at herself, she hastily withdrew

them, and from that instant found herself, all loyal Jacobite as she was, totally incapable of listening to the chances of success which attended the plans in agitation, but wholly occupied in wondering what must have been the Earl of Nithsdale's impression of her boldness, in having ventured thus to gaze upon him, and fearing he must necessarily have formed a very unfavourable opinion of her.

This was a great change! She was little aware herself that the subject of her anxiety had so completely shifted its ground, from the impression he might make on her, to that which she might make on him.

The Lady Winifred found the young Amy awaiting her with impatience in her chamber. "I have seen him, my dear lady—I have seen him!" she exclaimed with eagerness; "and if he is but as good as he is comely, why there is no harm in leaving it to one's king and one's parents to choose for one. I am so overjoyed to think my dear mistress may be as happy as she deserves to be! for you never could have been happy, my lady, if they had married you to such a husband as I had fancied in my own mind.—But you do not look half pleased, madam! Think you he is not so worthy a gentleman?" inquired Amy with a tone of alarm.

"Oh, yes, Amy; I do not think any one with such a voice could be other than most excellent and most gentle!"

"And it seemed to me, madam, as he was walking in the pleasaunce, that he had the goodliest eyebrows!—so black, and so straight! And yet he did not look as though he were stern."

"I believe not;—but indeed I scarcely ventured,—I was fearful—lest——"

"And then every time you turned at the end of the broad walk, he bowed with such grace and respect to your honoured mother, it did one's heart good to see; for it seemed as though he would make a dutiful son to her, as well as a good husband to you."

"Oh, Amy! I cannot think it possible he should ever be my husband."

"Why, I thought, madam, he was come here on purpose."

"He never can think of me, I am sure! so wise, so noble as he is! And I who know nothing, and have seen nothing—I never can make him a wife such as would be worthy of him!"

“ And if you are not worthy to match with any earl, or duke, or prince in the wide world, my lady, I do not know who is—good, sweet, gentle, beautiful, and noble as you are!” exclaimed Amy, with a burst of enthusiasm which almost resembled indignation at her lady for undervaluing herself.

“ Oh, no! Amy, not beautiful! I never thought before how much more beautiful my dear sister Lucy is than I am!”

“ Nay, my dear, dear lady, I have often heard my mother say the Lady Lucy may be taller, and may have more colour in her cheeks, but that for real beauty her features are not near equal to yours; and as for the Lady Carrington, or the Lady Mary, or——”

“ Stop, stop, Amy! I must not listen to such flatteries! What would Father Albert say, if he knew I was listening to such sinful vanities as praises of personal beauty, and that I was listening to hear myself preferred before my sisters? Oh, no! It is not thus I may make myself worthy of him who is to be my lord, if indeed he can condescend to such as I am.”

“ Oh, my sweet mistress! you are only too good. Bear with me, my lady, and I hope in time I may learn to be something like you. But indeed it hurts me to hear you speak so humbly and so sadly: I am sure that every time you dropped behind, I saw the earl slacken his pace, and steal a look to see if you were there.”

“ Did he, indeed?” said the young Winifred; but, checking herself, she added, “but now I will to my prayers. Alas! I wish Father Albert were here! I feel as if I had much need of confession, and of ghostly counsel; and yet I do not know what sin I have committed which seems to weigh so heavily upon me. My mind is bewildered. It is so very long since I have confessed! I wonder what Father Albert would say!”

CHAPTER VI.

His affection was of a very extraordinary alloy, — a composition of conscience, and love, and generosity, and gratitude, and all those noble affections that raise the passion to its greatest height.

Clarendon's Life.

ON the following morning, after some private conversation between the duchess, her son, and the Earl of Nithsdale, the Lady Winifred was summoned to the oak-chamber, where her mother formally taking her hand, placed it in that of the earl. They both knelt before her to receive her blessing; and though as yet they had never addressed one word to each other, they rose from their knees, their faiths mutually plighted.

Such marriages have often been contracted, and sometimes they may have proved as well assorted as those in which the choice of the individuals has been more consulted; but it has seldom occurred that hearts have so sincerely acquiesced in the vows dictated by others as on this occasion.

The Earl of Nithsdale was approaching the age of thirty. He had visited Paris, he had travelled in Italy, he had passed some time in Germany. There was a singularity in the eyebrows, whose darkness had already attracted Amy's notice, and the clear but melancholy blue eyes which they shaded, in the pale complexion, and the expression of sadness about the mouth, which had proved irresistible to many a foreign fair one. He had often won unwooed the hearts of those Parisian belles, who were not devoted to the dreary court decorum prevalent during the reign of Madame de Maintenon; while many of the more glowing beauties of Italy had absolutely courted the favour of the young Englishman, and many a sentimental German seemed ready to yield her heart, almost before he could lay siege to it.

In his early youth he had not failed to profit by the advances which were thus made to him; but his was not a character which could long find pleasure in such conquests. He had an innate preference for virtue and purity; his disposition was naturally enthusiastic and contemplative. The gay, the thoughtless, passing attachments to which we have alluded, were not in unison with his mind. The sprightly Parisian was too volatile to make any lasting impression on

such a heart, the Italian too little refined, the German too easily won ; so that, though he had passed the first flush of youth, his real affections were still unhackneyed.

He had accidentally found himself at Bruges when the Lady Lucy pronounced her vows, and was one of the assembly who crowded the church to witness the ceremony. Lady Winifred had been pointed out to him among the convent pensioners, as being sister to the young nun ; and he had then remarked upon the innocence and purity of her countenance, and had thought within himself how much more attractive was such an expression than all the graces and fascinations which are meant to allure.

If there is any foundation of virtue in the heart of a man, the more he has been thrown with the less respectable part of the sex, the more he has been exposed to their allurements, the more highly does he prize entire innocence when he meets with it, and the more strict is his line of demarcation between the modest, and those in whose conduct there may be any touch of levity. It might almost be taken as a touchstone of the original disposition, whether or not, through all the errors into which man, when tempted, is liable to fall, he yet preserves a quick perception of genuine purity, and also retains a taste and a veneration for it. Whatever may have been his aberrations, there is always hope that such a one will return to the path of virtue.

The Earl of Nithsdale, however, was not one who had ever been completely carried away in the vortex of dissipation. He had still cherished within his mind an ideal model of perfection, which had preserved him from yielding up his affections to any of the fair creatures who fluttered around him. He had always resolved that the woman to whom he should unite himself should be pure as the unsunned snow, with mind, soul, and affections fresh and unpolluted.

It was, therefore, willingly that he entered into the alliance urged by the agent of his master—a master towards whom he inherited loyalty with the blood which flowed in his veins, and to whom, since his interview with him in Flanders, he felt additionally bound by every tie of romantic honour.

Lord Nithsdale had sought that interview with all the feelings of enthusiasm naturally inspired by the circumstance of the young prince so gallantly entering the King of France's

army. He was then saddened at the appearance of ill-health visible in the Chevalier, and he was disheartened by perceiving how poorly he was attended. These facts, unpromising as they were, affected his hopes of success, but they did not lessen the interest he felt for the royal exile. The divisions among the Chevalier's adherents, consequent upon Colonel Hook's imprudent neglect of the more moderate Jacobites, who were not prepared rashly and unconditionally to yield the hard-earned liberties of their country into the hands of a restored monarch, portended, to a person who was not of a sanguine temperament, the ill-success which attended the attempt of 1707, but it did not for a moment affect his allegiance.

This despondent, yet devoted loyalty threw over his whole demeanour a tinge of melancholy, which was calculated to render him only more interesting in the eyes of a young girl; and she soon learned to watch with anxiety the varying expression of his brow, and to hail with joy the smile which her presence invariably called forth.

His affection for her was a mingled feeling of almost parental care and protection, with a punctilious respect, excited by her innocence and her noble birth.

She had been brought up to honour and to obey; and the love to which she gladly and dutifully yielded every faculty of her soul, evinced itself in a thousand actions of almost filial reverence. She was unaccustomed to the common attentions mechanically granted by the other sex, and unconsciously received by those who have lived in the world; and he sometimes smilingly checked her when she stooped for her own roll of silk, or performed for herself and others a thousand little services, which, in former days especially, were exacted not only from a lover, but from all gentlemen towards all ladies.

When, however, they occasionally found themselves alone, a circumstance of rare occurrence, then her instinctive inborn nobleness and modesty made her for the time assume, unknown to herself, the dignity of demeanour befitting one of her rank and station. She was no longer the timid and affectionate girl, only watching to forestall the wishes of him to whom she owed duty and allegiance; but the high-born damsel, whose gentle purity was more awful in its simplicity than the frown of another.

The novelty of such a character — the contrast it afforded to those which he had previously met with — the unusual mixture of perfect confidence in her entire affection for himself, and of perfect certainty that a few weeks would make her his wedded wife, with the fear of alarming the shrinking bashfulness of one nurtured in such utter seclusion, — the desire of winning the unreserved confidence of a creature accustomed to reveal the secret workings of her innocent soul to her confessor alone, and the pleasure of gently insinuating himself into her heart of hearts, — gave a new and singular character to this courtship. His own soul seemed to grow fresh, young, and pure by the study of hers. He enjoyed once more all the simple tastes and pleasures of childhood, which had long ceased to charm him ; and he hailed with as much delight, as in some cases a lover would the confession of reciprocal affection, any detail of the youthful amusements of her convent life which he could succeed in luring her to describe.

It was seldom, however, that she spoke herself. She loved to sit in her own accustomed and retired seat, apparently occupied with her embroidery, while she gave up her whole soul to the rapture of listening to his voice, and of drinking long draughts of the new and absorbing passion which it was become her duty to feel. If, as not unfrequently happened, he addressed himself to her, and asked her opinion, her feelings, upon the subject which might be under discussion, she started as from a reverie ; and unless it was one which touched upon some matter of morality, of religion, or of loyalty, she could give no opinion, for in truth she had none. She listened for the pleasure of hearing his full, sweet, mellow voice ; of learning his sentiments ; and of sometimes stealing an occasion of dwelling unobserved upon the countenance, which, in her eyes, beamed with all that was noble and intellectual.

On the day preceding that on which the marriage ceremony was to be performed by a Catholic priest in the chapel of Poole Castle, the Duchess of Powis gave her daughter some of the sage maternal counsel which was to fit her to become a virtuous wife, and the head of a noble household, at a period when the duties of housewifery really devolved upon the mistress.

“ Be seated, my dear Winifred, and listen to me attentively.

You are now about to enter upon a mode of life entirely new to you ; you will have no one to guide and direct you."

"Oh ! madam ! think you my lord is likely to be called away from me so soon ?"

"No, my child ; it is not on that account I speak, unless indeed our gracious master should carry his proposed landing into effect ; in such a case you would not be a degenerate daughter of the house of Herbert, but you would wish your husband to be among the first who flock to the standard of our rightful sovereign. But though no such paramount duty, to which all others must yield, should call him from your side, there are many points connected with your household arrangements in which you must act and judge for yourself. Of course, should any circumstance occur on which there should be a diversity of opinion between yourself and your husband," (the Lady Winifred looked up in her mother's face with an expression of unfeigned astonishment,) "remember, Winifred, that on such occasions it will be your duty to submit, whether your reason is convinced or not."

"Is it possible ?"

"Is what possible, my child ?"

"Is it possible, madam, that I should ever hold an opinion contrary to my lord's ?"

"Such things have occurred," resumed the duchess, while a transient, almost imperceptible smile passed over her lips. "When you have lived more in the world, you may perhaps acquire wishes and sentiments of your own. Should subjects of dispute arise ——"

"Oh ! madam !"

"Remember, it is the wife's duty to yield ; and remember, that a soft word turneth away wrath."

The duchess had proceeded so far with her advice, because she had ever deemed it right thus to admonish each of her daughters before they entered into the marriage state, when the Lady Winifred exclaimed with tears in her eyes —

"Oh ! my dearest mother ! surely you have not seen in me any signs of wilfulness ! Heaven knows my heart is all submission towards him to whom it has pleased you and my sovereign to unite my destiny. Heaven is my witness," she added, clasping her hands, "that I honour him — that I revere him, (saving yourself, madam, and Father Albert,) se-

cond to nothing under Heaven! And to-morrow, mother—to-morrow, I suppose, I may honour him first of all created beings!" She turned her soft and tearful eyes to Heaven with an expression of such enthusiastic, such sublime devotion—though the devotion was not at the moment all religious, that the duchess looked upon her for a space in mute astonishment.

"You are a strange girl," at length she said; "so silent, so reserved, and yet so ardent:" and the mother, who had been too much occupied with other thoughts to study the real character concealed under the gentle, unobtrusive deportment of her child, was surprised and perplexed at this unexpected burst of feeling.

After a pause she resumed. "And there is another thing which I have never failed to impress upon your sisters, which is, that however exalted may be a woman's rank, however ample her husband's fortune, she should not disdain to be the diligent housewife as well as the high-born lady. I have in this small clasped book a collection of family receipts, which I wish you to study carefully, and which you will find of infinite service. They descended to me from my grandmother, her grace of Somerset; and our family have always been renowned for our almond comfits and our spiced cakes. Amy Evans can assist you, for she has learned to compose these condiments under our faithful Rachel."

The Lady Winifred with gratitude and humility received from her mother's hand the small green book with silver clasps which contained these valuable documents. The duchess continued: "In uniting you to one of the Maxwell blood, I need scarcely fear for your principles of loyalty. There can be no doubt that, born of the Herberts, and married to a Maxwell, you will live and die true to the king of your ancestors. And now, my dear child, may a merciful Providence grant that, firm in the faith in which you have been brought up, you may live a virtuous, if not a happy life, and that you may die the death of the righteous!"

The Lady Winifred knelt; and her mother having thus advised her upon conjugal, economical, political, and religious subjects, kissed her fair child's forehead, and they retired to rest.

The next day witnessed the vows of the betrothed pair; and they shortly afterwards took up their abode at the Earl of Nithsdale's castle of Terreagles, in Dumfriesshire.

CHAPTER VII.

The realm from danger to secure,
To foreign aid we cry ;
With papists and non-jurors join
To keep out popery.

Whig Song.

IN the mutual affection which subsisted between herself and her lord, the Countess of Nithsdale would now have enjoyed happiness, as perfect and as unalloyed as mortals may look for here below, had not the public affairs of the time been to both a subject of deep interest and anxiety.

The party of the Chevalier de St. George was strong in Scotland. The people in general were disaffected to the government in consequence of the Union : a measure against which many signed a protest, which was presented by the Duke of Athol ; and a measure which, in the eyes of many Scotchmen, appeared contrary to the honour, interest, and constitution of their country, the birthright of the peers, the privileges of the barons and boroughs, and to the claim of right, property, and liberty of the subject.

While such feelings tended to produce discontent among all orders, the regular troops, under the Earl of Leven, did not exceed 2500 men, many of whom upon the landing of the Chevalier would most probably have joined him. The castle of Edinburgh was destitute of ammunition ; and if it had surrendered, the Jacobites would have found themselves masters of a considerable sum of money.

The King of France, with the view of making a diversion from the Netherlands, and of occupying Queen Anne with disturbances at home, had granted considerable assistance to the Pretender. A squadron was assembled at Dunkirk under the Chevalier de Fourbin, and a body of land forces was embarked under M. de Gace : James was furnished with services of gold and silver plate, sumptuous tents, splendid liveries, and all sorts of necessaries, even to profusion. Louis had presented him with a sword studded with diamonds, and had repeated to him the same words with which he had dismissed his father, — that the kindest wish he could express towards him was, “ that he might never see him again.”

The Scottish nobles but awaited the moment of the Chevalier's landing to rise simultaneously in his favour: though outwardly all was quiet, they were on the tip-toe of expectation, when the active measures taken by Queen Anne, the vigilance of Sir George Byng, who intercepted the squadron before it could reach Edinburgh, and the wind, which prevented its ever arriving at Inverness, rendered vain all their hopes and fears.

The Chevalier, after having been tost upon the seas during a month of tempestuous weather, returned to Dunkirk; and Sir George Byng sailed up the Leith road to Edinburgh, for the purpose of receiving the freedom of the city which he had delivered from impending danger.

Thus ended the Chevalier de St. George's first, and almost ridiculous, attempt to recover the throne of his ancestors.

To the Earl of Nithsdale this period had been one of no common anxiety: he was too well aware of the dissensions which Colonel Hook's imprudence had produced among the Chevalier's most faithful partisans, to feel confident of the result under any circumstances; and he knew that till the king was actually in Scotland, and was himself a rallying point for all his adherents, nothing but mischief could accrue from any movement among his friends. He had therefore so conducted himself as to escape the notice of government: his disappointment was great when he found that a moment, in many respects so favourable for the Jacobite cause, had been allowed to escape; but far greater was his mortification at finding the monarch to whom he had devoted himself could be so easily persuaded to return to dependence on the court of France; and his fears for the future affected him still more deeply than his vexation at the failure of the present attempt.

His young wife also grieved at the dispersion of their cherished hopes; but to her, the object of real and deep anxiety was her husband. Sometimes, when, with folded arms, he would gaze vacantly upon the blazing fire, his dark brows knit, his lips compressed, his mind absorbed in sad retrospections and melancholy forebodings, the unread book would fall upon her knee, or the needle drop from her hand, as she watched the expression of his face. On one occasion, when he caught her eyes thus fixed upon him, a kind but passing smile illumined his countenance; and addressing her

with the low and mellow voice which first made her maiden heart his own, — “My gentle Winifred,” he said, “you have exchanged a calm and peaceful home, beloved and cheerful friends, the sister of your affections, and all the joyous carelessness of youth, for an unsettled country, a troubled land, and a gloomy husband — who hates himself, dearest, when he thinks his thoughtfulness and his abstraction can cast a shade of care over that smooth and tranquil brow ——”

“Oh my dear lord!” she exclaimed, as she looked up at him, her eyes half filled with tears.

Lord Nithsdale continued, — “Or that his moody silence can bring tears into those dear eyes!” and seating himself beside her, he pressed her slender hand in his.

“It is not his silence, but my beloved lord’s kind words, that have brought tears into these foolish eyes. I can scarce believe that one so far above me in wisdom and in knowledge — one whose mind is engrossed by subjects of such moment, can take so much thought for such an ignorant child as I am. I often regret my convent education; for I feel, my lord, that I can be no companion to you; and in these times especially, when ——”

“Wish not yourself other than you are, my love! It is that purity, that heavenly innocence, that confiding simplicity, which render you in my eyes so immeasurably superior to all the far-famed beauties of this, or any other land. What are their charms, their wit, their talents, their learning, their acquired attractions, to that pure blush which even now mantles my own sweet Winifred’s cheek, to hear her praises, though from a husband’s lips?”

And Winifred was happy; for she found that in truth her unobtrusive affection, her gentle cares, could alone dispel the gloom which hung over that beloved husband.

Time, however, changed the nature of his regrets. Lord Nithsdale’s clear understanding could not fail to perceive that his country was quiet, prosperous, and glorious under the rule of its present monarch; and the doubt would cross him whether it were the act of a true patriot to favour the pretensions of one who must necessarily overturn much of what tended to promote that prosperity.

Still, was he not by birth a Jacobite? a Catholic? and therefore bound from motives of religion to support a Catholic

claimant to the throne? Moreover, had he not, in his romantic interview with the Pretender, pledged himself personally to his service? It was too late to retract! If any attempt were renewed in his favour, he could not but join in it. Yet the consciousness of being bound in honour to a cause of which his reason could not thoroughly approve, oppressed him with a sense of care — almost of guilt.

He was a man who wished strictly to act as honour and as duty might dictate, and he was not carried away by eager hopefulness, or by ambition, or by passion. He saw and balanced so nicely the reasons and arguments on both sides, that he was apt to be dissatisfied with himself; sometimes to think he was guilty of a dereliction of duty towards his lawful sovereign, when his clear judgment forced upon him the thriving condition of his country; at others, to feel that he was perhaps ready to sacrifice the real good of thousands to his own private notions of personal honour.

The Lady Nithsdale, with never-failing gentleness, soothed these wayward feelings, if wayward they may be called, which were so natural to a conscientious man in times such as those we treat of. She would chase away his gloom by light and playful converse; she would gather around him their friends and neighbours, and lure him to forget his careful thoughts in the pleasing duties of hospitality; or she would draw his attention to the gambols of their children, the young Lord Maxwell and the little Lady Anne, and lead him to join in their sports, and thus lose the sense of the conflicting duties which pressed so heavily upon his mind. He was always, and at all times, the object of her thoughts; and the earl in return hung on her as his stay, his support, his consolation.

The bond of their mutual affection thus became more firmly knit than if their lives had passed in an uninterrupted flow of happiness. The affection which is wearied by sadness, or falls off in sorrow, is one which has taken but shallow root in the heart.

It is perhaps to the credit of human nature, that misfortune is not the trial under which mutual attachment so frequently gives way as under that of unbroken prosperity. When there is any groundwork of tenderness, the sight of the object of that tenderness in sorrow, in sickness, or in suffering, endears it more and more. The attention is fixed; the thoughts are

occupied: affection is called into action; it is not allowed to drop into a slumber, which sometimes ends in lethargy. The enduring love of wives to wayward husbands, the exceeding fondness of some husbands for capricious wives, may thus be accounted for. How natural was it, then, that an anxious and thoughtful temper, produced by conscientious scruples, devoted loyalty, romantic honour, and disinterested patriotism, should concentrate upon her husband every feeling of a soul which, like the Countess of Nithsdale's, was made up of duty and of tenderness!

The imprudent boldness with which many Jacobites professed their principles and their attachment to the Pretender was to Lord Nithsdale a source of much vexation. The Duchess of Gordon sent the faculty of advocates a silver medal, representing on one side the Chevalier de St. George, and on the reverse the British islands, with the motto "Reddite." The duchess was thanked for having presented them with a medal of "their sovereign lord the king;" and a confident hope was expressed that her grace would soon have an opportunity of offering them a second medal, struck upon the "restoration of the king and royal family, and the destruction of usurping tyranny and whiggery."

This whole proceeding was afterwards disowned by the faculty, and by a solemn act they declared their attachment to the queen and the Protestant succession. But such un-called-for boldness, such weak retracting of daring imprudence, in the opinion of Lord Nithsdale, augured ill for the cause to which he was bound. Such conduct could in no wise forward the hopes of his master, and it only served to keep the country in an unquiet and disturbed state.

He disapproved of the measures of his party; and consequently he kept himself somewhat retired at Terreagles, associating more with his immediate neighbours than courting political connexions. With the Earl of Derwentwater alone he kept up a constant and confidential intercourse. They together deplored the infatuation of some of their friends: in loyalty and patriotism each found in the other a spirit congenial to his own.

Lord Nithsdale's visits to London, or to Edinburgh, were rare; and no change occurred to mark the lapse of years, unless we may note that which took place in the bearing of

Amy Evans. She was still, as before, high in her lady's favour, who regarded her more in the light of a confidential, though humble friend, than merely as a waiting-woman. Indeed, Amy in her childhood had been admitted as play-fellow and associate to the daughter of an old cavalier who resided in the neighbourhood of Poole Castle, and from her youthful intercourse with Mrs. Mellicent Hilton, she had acquired a tone of feeling somewhat superior to those in her station of life.

Lady Nithsdale could not but remark that the laughing eyes which once sparkled with merriment were now dull and spiritless, and that the ruddy cheek had lost its bloom. When she sought the chamber where her maidens were employed at their needle, she no longer heard the clear voice of Amy, who used to enliven the light labours of her companions with the ditties she had learned in her childhood. Her gay laugh no longer pealed cheerily on the ear. Lady Nithsdale attributed the change which had gradually stolen over the demeanour of her dear Amy Evans to her separation from her lover.

"You are sad, dear Amy," she one day remarked to her; "but I think I have news that will call up the bloom on those pale cheeks, and I shall hear your old Welsh songs carolled with fresh glee. The farm of Hetherstone is vacant now, and my lord proposes that David should become his tenant;—and then I suppose I must make Jeannie Scott my 'tirewoman!'"

"Alas! my gracious mistress, not unless your ladyship is weary of the services of poor Amy Evans. I trust that I can still diligently ply my needle, and that I can arrange your ladyship's head-gear with as neat a hand as Jean Scott at the least."

"Nay, you have been a diligent and careful servant to me, Amy, and I shall love to see you as careful and diligent a wife; and when I visit you in your home, I shall once more see your merry eyes sparkle as they used to do."

"No, madam, those days are gone by for me. You shall ever find me a true and faithful servant, but I shall never be a wife."

"And what will David do without a housewife to see to his dairy, to bake his bread and his bannocks, and to trim his hearth, and keep all neat and seemly around him?"

“He needs not me for a housewife, madam : he has found one, more to his taste, these six months back. He was married, madam, last Lammas-tide ;” and, though her hands trembled, she still proceeded in the composition of the spiced comfits which her lady had come to overlook.

“Oh ! my poor Amy ! And is this true ? Can men really be so false ?”

“Indeed can they, madam. And I am not the first girl who has been slighted : they all tell me so ! But I always held myself high ; and it is no comfort to hear how, when his wedding morning came, Donald M’Rae was nowhere to be found ; or how Jockie Smith deserted Kate Armstrong, after he had broken a gold piece with her ; or how Mary Morrison pined herself to death for the loss of Jamie Elliot. But I am not one to pine myself to death ! David’s wife shall never hear that Amy Evans had so mean a spirit ; no, she shall hear of me cheerful, and contented, madam. And why should I not be so, when I have such a good, kind lady, whom I love better — ay, better than I once did David himself !” And now the tears rained fast from her eyes, which Nature seemed to have intended should only express sprightliness and warm affection. “But, I beseech you, madam, speak not to Jean Scott or to Annie Bell of my griefs. They have never yet seen me weep, and I would not have them know that David’s falsehood had wrung tears from me. I shall not feel it so much after a while, my lady ! And when all is said and done, where could I ever be so happy as with my kind, my honoured mistress ? So you will never say anything more, my lady, of making Jean Scott your ’tirewoman ?”

“Oh no ! dear Amy ; I should never, never like any one about me so well as you !”

“I thought so, my lady ; and I told Jean Scott I was sure you would never turn me off, though she prides herself so upon her taste, and the nimbleness of her fingers, and is always throwing out that the time will come when she will have my place !” And Amy was half consoled for the loss of David, when she had ascertained that she retained the same hold on her mistress’s affections. Since the blight which had fallen on her first and early love, she valued the favour of her lady above all other earthly goods, and watched over it with the jealous tenderness of a lover.

Her secluded education, and her own early marriage to so monourable a man, had prevented the Countess of Nithsdale's having ever witnessed, much more having ever experienced, the caprice and infidelities of the other sex. She had heard and read of them, as of matters undoubtedly true, but as never likely to come under her own immediate cognizance ; and she was astonished at Amy's treating a lover's desertion of his mistress as an event of common occurrence. She wondered still more that pride should, in a low-born country maiden's heart, almost overbalance the more instinctive feeling of love. That a noble damsel should resent any slight was indispensable to her birth and breeding ; and the proud blood of the Herberts mantled in her cheeks at the mere imagining such a case. But she thought, had she been lowly born, pride could never have sustained her under so cruel a blow. She forgot that, in all ranks alike, each feels the eyes of his equals upon him,—that the lowest, as well as the highest, have their world, before whom to blush is degradation.

It was not that the gentle Lady Nithsdale was haughty in her nature ; the affection which subsisted between herself and Amy sufficiently proved the contrary ; but as she was imbued with the divine indefeasible right of kings, so was she with the innate inherent nobility of an ancient family.

CHAPTER VIII.

The virtue of her lively looks
 Excels the precious stone,
 I wish to have none other books
 To read or look upon.

The modest mirth that she doth use
 Is mixed with shamefacedness.

*Attributed to Lord Rockford,
 Anne Boleyn's brother.*

ALTHOUGH they differed widely in politics, the Duke of Montrose was one of the persons whom Lord Nithsdale looked upon as a true patriot, and a young man of great promise. He was the grandson of the great marquis, and had been by Queen Anne lately raised to the dignity of Duke of Montrose.

The family of the Earl of Nithsdale was, through Douglas, Earl of Moreton, nearly connected with that of the duke ; and

also, through the marriage of Lord Nithsdale's sister, the Lady Mary Maxwell, to the Earl of Traquhair, with that of his young duchess, the Lady Christian Carnegie, daughter to the Earl of Northesk.

This double connexion had assisted to foster a friendship, which the opposite tendency of their political opinions might otherwise have prevented from attaining maturity; and consequently, when the young Duke of Montrose first brought his fair bride and cousin into Scotland, he failed not to present her to a family with which they were mutually connected.

The duke was a zealous supporter of the Protestant succession, and was at that period high in favour with Queen Anne. His youthful wife had shone as one of the most brilliant stars at her court; and gay, lovely, and volatile, she had not failed to adopt the style and manners then in vogue; she was esteemed the most modish lady about the court; the furbelow of her petticoat was no sooner seen than it was copied; her commode attracted all eyes, the jaunty air of her hoop was envied by all the sex, and she no sooner appeared in one of the small muffs which we sometimes see represented in pictures of the time, than all the muffs about town were cut in half.

She enjoyed the admiration she excited, as was natural to one who was aware, though not vain, of her powers of fascination; and there was a grace in her harmless coquetries, and a joyous good-humour, a frankness, piercing through the court airs, which had become as it were second nature to her, that took captive the hearts of all.

The young duchess would sometimes rally Lady Nithsdale on her antiquated notions, her housewife-like avocations, her retired habits; she would try to persuade her to follow the fashion of the day, and would urge her to taste with her the exciting pleasure of being swiftly borne by a spirited steed over hill and vale, dell and dingle: but Lady Nithsdale, unaccustomed to such exertions, would shrink from the very idea, and trembled when she saw her fair friend mounted on her palfrey, and, dressed according to the mode which has excited the indignation of cotemporary writers, dash from the hall-door like an arrow from the bow; then, turning gaily back, laugh at her timid cousin's fears. Her hair, which was suffered to hang at some length on her shoulders, was loosely

tied by a scarlet riband, which played like a streamer behind her ; her small hat was edged with silver ; her dress was of green camlet embroidered with the same material ; and a cravat of the finest lace completed the toilet of the *élégante* of the year 1711. The horse, as though it were proud of so fair a rider, seemed to share in her vanity : he was adorned after the same airy manner ; and tossed and shook his pretty head, as if he despised the silken rein which hung loosely upon his neck.

Lady Nithsdale watched the party of equestrians as long as they continued in sight ; and Amy, whose blighted hopes enabled her to give her undivided affection to her lady, and her undivided thoughts to her dress, had not allowed this opportunity to escape of enlarging her notions upon the subject of the prevailing mode. Presuming upon her favour with her mistress, she had stolen away from Annie Bell and Jeannie Scott, and glided to the oriel window of the hall, that she might see the great London bride in her new-fangled garb.

“ By my troth, madam, but her grace is very fair, and wears a goodly dress, and mounts a jennet such as might befit a lady in one of my old ballads ! ”

“ Yes, Amy,” replied Lady Nithsdale, “ the dress is strange, but graceful, and well does it suit my gay and sprightly cousin : yet she must have a marvellous good courage ; I think I never could mount any horse, much less a pawing prancing steed such as delights her grace. It is strange thus to peril one’s life for pleasure ! ”

“ And yet, my lady, such a close-fitting jaunty coat as that would right well set off your ladyship’s slender waist. Trust me, madam, but I should like to have the curling of your soft brown hair, and the shaking in a thought of powder, (her grace’s maid showed me the powder-puffs they use now,) and the making it just hang in such ringlets as my lady duchess’s.”

“ Nay, Amy, such flighty doings are not for me ! ”

In the evening, when the company were sipping their chocolate, and the servants were preparing the ombre-tables, the lively duchess again rallied the Lady Nithsdale upon her taste for staying at home.

“ Now we will put you upon your trial,” she said, playfully tapping her with her fan ; “ and you, my lord duke, and the Earl of Nithsdale himself, and Sir Hector M’Gregor, and Mr.

M'Kenzie, and my fair cousin Crawford of Kilbirny, and young Mistress Rose Scott of Murdison, shall sit in judgment, and pronounce whether I have not passed a more profitable morning than our demure hostess there ! Now stand forth, Countess of Nithsdale, and answer the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth !”

The Lady Nithsdale smiled, while the slight colour mounted to her cheek, at being called into notice ; but she professed her willingness to submit to the verdict of so goodly a tribunal.

“ After our morning meal,” resumed the duchess, “ which I grant you was somewhat to the credit of the housewife — there was no fault to be found with the bannocks, nor with the saffron-cakes, nor the honey, nor the marmalade, nor the Finnan haddocks, nor any of the other delicacies for which our good land of Scotland is renowned, — after this meal, what were my lady countess’s avocations !”

“ Even such household duties as your grace must needs attend to when you reach your own castle of Kincarn. I visited the still-room, and gave the housekeeper directions for making of some mint-water, and some julap, and other simple medicines, which the neighbouring poor are used to procure at the castle. And, moreover, this is the season when the distilled waters for the year must be made ; the elder-flowers and the roses are all in bloom.”

“ Oh, stop, my dear countess ! This last employment was most vain and useless ! for who could endure such homely scents ? It is impossible now to use anything but orange-flower water ; so you have indeed mis-spent your time most shamefully ! Now you, by your own confession, did only one thing at a time, while I cultivated my mind and improved my beauty at one and the same moment. I studied Locke on the Human Understanding, while my woman curled my hair ; after which I read two chapters on the properties of the loadstone, and — I would fain have studied the mathematics, only my wicked lord” — and she shook her fan at the duke — “ would not give me the lesson he promised.” She put on the prettiest pout of her ruby lips, while her gay eyes laughed through their fringe of eyelashes, as she looked down her cheeks with a mock air of pettish anger ; then raising them suddenly on the duke, she continued in a reproachful tone, “ You know, my lord, you would not wish your wife to be quite out of the

fashion ; and every lady now talks of the mathematics, and speaks but in words with a Latin derivation ; and I will learn these things too, in spite of you !”

The duke looked upon her with delight and love, while he replied, “ Learn of our fair hostess how to make a sack-posset, Christian !”

“ Not unless your grace will teach me the mathematics ! Now promise, and it shall be a bargain, and I will let you kiss my hand upon it.”

The duke most gladly availed himself of her permission to imprint on the fair hand she extended more than one kiss.

“ Nay, you are too bold !” she added, withdrawing her hand suddenly, and frowning for a moment, while she expressed a pretty anger in the eloquent language of the fan, by quickly opening and shutting the sticks so as to produce a somewhat sharp noise. “ But, my lord duke, you interrupt the trial. Silence in the court ! The Lady Nithsdale had not made an end, when I, to my shame be it spoken, somewhat rudely interrupted her. Proceed, fair countess.”

“ I visited my children for a while, and then I practised to my new spinet some of the songs your grace showed me last night ; for my lord loves sweet sounds so well, that he will sometimes listen to such poor music as I can make.”

“ That is well. But now, fair countess, how did you pass your time while I, having duly attended both to my understanding and my person, now took heed to my health, by galloping in the clear fresh air, many and many a mile, over sweet heath and thymy downs ?”

“ Why, after seeing my maidens at their embroidery, I wrote and despatched a letter to my dear sister Lucy at Bruges.”

“ Useless ! still vain and useless ! If your letter had been addressed to some court lady, who might have informed you in return of what colour was Mrs. Masham’s new hood, and whether the queen had yet adopted the fashion of my last commode, and whether her grace of Marlborough had yet left off the philomot-coloured petticoat of which we are all so weary, — well ! But what news can your devout sister send you from her dull convent ?”

“ Nay, your grace is jesting now ! Every word that comes from Bruges, and tells me of the dear, dear friends of my childhood, is precious to me.”

“ I can well believe it,” replied the duchess with a winning frankness ; “ for dearly do I love a letter from old Eupheme Stuart, the sister of our minister at Ethy ; and I would often rather sit and con over her prosy epistle, than dress myself for a court-ball. But you know, Lady Nithsdale, that all other considerations must give way before our loyalty to our monarch.”

“ Most true, your grace,” answered the Lady Nithsdale, in a tone of voice which showed she thought of the “ king over the water,” while the volatile duchess watched her with a laughing and malicious countenance.

“ Oh, my dearest countess !” she exclaimed, “ do you know you have patched yourself in the most factious manner ! For Heaven’s sake, remove that shocking patch on the wrong side of your face ! it might lead to much mischief. It is an old saying, that extremes meet ; and they say that some of the discomfited Whigs are even now plotting with the Jacobites. This is a season when it behoves every one to be most discreet in such tokens of their sentiments, and your imprudent patching might bring suspicion on your good lord.”

“ Does your grace speak of the mole on my right temple ?”

“ Is it indeed a mole ? I pray your pardon, dearest cousin. But this is very sad ! quite a misfortune ! Do you not know we all of late express our political opinions after this fashion ? You may perceive I always wear a patch on the left side of my chin, to evince my loyalty.”

“ If such be the case, my loyalty is born with me, and cannot cease but with my life !” replied the Countess of Nithsdale, whose feelings were so strong and so devoted she could not jest or banter on the subject.

“ Treason ! treason !” exclaimed the duchess : “ we shall have to put you on your trial for still higher crimes and misdemeanours.”

“ A prisoner cannot be tried for two offences at once, and your grace has not brought the first accusation to an end,” interposed the Earl of Nithsdale, somewhat anxious to give the conversation another turn.

“ To tell the honest truth, my lord, I thought the evidence seemed likely to go against myself, and I was not sorry to drop the prosecution. We will let judgment go by default ! Is that good law, my Lord Privy Seal, for you should un-

derstand these matters?" she continued, turning to her husband with an air of mock solemnity.

"You are a mad-cap, Christian!" replied the duke, who, while he half attempted to repress her lively sallies, listened to them with pleased amusement, and, like the mother of a spoiled child, looked round upon the company to see if they also did not applaud her wit and grace.

In truth, though she was somewhat the spoiled child of fortune, no one could wish her other than she was. What in another would have been frivolous or impertinent, in her was graceful and most fitting. She was in the vein for playful malice, and with an air of mock penitence replied, "Well, then, my lord, I will be most staid and serious. I will not play one single game at ombre to-night, but I will sit by my gentle cousin's side, and learn of her to ply my needle as good housewives and virtuous matrons should;" and seating herself on a low stool in the window, she fell to sorting and choosing shades of silks, till she had confused and mixed them all.

"I must look at you, fair cousin," she added suddenly, "to learn how I should begin; — but methinks you have not chosen your colours with that taste which all admire in whatever else you do. Surely a white rose on that pale blue ground lacks contrast: a red rose, or a tulip, or a peony, would better please the eye; a white rose is, to my mind, but a mean and insipid flower," she added, with a sidelong glance at Lady Nithsdale.

"In my eyes it is the fairest flower that blows," replied the countess. "This stool is for my mother; and well may the white rose be dear to the widow, and the daughter, of the Duke of Powis!"

"Well, may it be dear, for it has cost you dear, or rather it might have cost you dear, had it not been for our gracious sovereign's clemency in restoring to your brother his estates. Now own, sweet coz, that never was Old England so great or so glorious as she is at present; our navies triumphant, our armies crowned with laurels, our commerce flourishing, our colonies prospering, our negotiations successful — Anything else, my lord duke? for I often hear a recapitulation of our glories, and I ought to know them by heart."

"Nay, dearest cousin, I do not understand such things; but I know full well that adverse fortune cannot loose us from our allegiance."

“Nay, nay, constancy to a falling cause is treason, not allegiance ; for you know

‘Treason doth never prosper. What’s the reason ?
That when it prospers, none dare call it treason.’”

“Methinks, if any are guilty of treason, it is not those who through weal and through woe, through danger and distress, at the risk of their fortunes and their persons, preserve their fidelity to the king of their ancestors !”

The Earl of Nithsdale turned a warning glance upon his wife, whose feelings had for a moment outrun her prudence. The blood rushed into her face ; her eyes filled with tears.

“Nay, dearest cousin, you are moved. Forgive my giddy bantering, and trust me, that whether Whig or Tory, Protestant or Catholic, Jacobite or not, I love you dearly ; and if ever there should arise occasion to prove it, you shall not find your cousin Christian Montrose wanting :” and she threw her arms around her neck, and embraced Lady Nithsdale with a warm-hearted frankness which caused their playful dispute to draw still closer the bonds of affection between them.

Although the earl would not have denied his attachment to the exiled family, he wished not to be unnecessarily forward in expressing his sentiments. He respected the sincere patriotism of the Duke of Montrose — he did him the justice to believe that it was from firm conviction that he was so strenuous a supporter of the Protestant succession ; and it was no matter of surprise to him when, two years afterwards, the duke retired from the ministry, rather than support the Earl of Oxford in measures of which his conscience did not approve.

CHAPTER IX.

Wigton’s coming, Nithsdale’s coming,
Carnwarth’s coming, Kenmure’s coming,
Derwentwater and Foster’s coming,
Withrington and Nairne’s coming :
Little wot ye who’s coming,
Blythe Cowhill, and a’s coming.

The Chevalier’s Muster-roll.

THE queen’s health was now declining ; and Lord Nithsdale, in common with many others of his party, looked forward to the chance of a peaceable restoration of the Stuarts.

His impartial judgment acknowledged that, under the rule of Anne, England enjoyed a more than common measure of prosperity ; and though she was not the rightful heir, still it was Stuart blood which ran in her veins. He augured, from her silence upon the address of both houses of parliament, urging her to press the Duke of Lorraine and her other allies to exclude the Pretender from their dominions, and from her open disapprobation of the Elector's sitting in the house of peers, as Duke of Cambridge, or even taking up his abode in England, that her secret inclinations were in favour of her brother.

All these considerations combined to render Lord Nithsdale unwilling to disturb the tranquillity of his native land ; and it was with satisfaction that he found month after month elapse without his being called upon to sacrifice either the peace of his country, or the principles of loyalty in which he had been brought up.

The moment, however, came at length, in which conflicting duties made it difficult for the most conscientious to preserve a fame untarnished, or so to conduct themselves as that their motives should not be liable to misconstruction. If in times comparatively settled, when loyalty and patriotism may and ought to go hand in hand, it is difficult for public men to steer clear of suspicion, we should not be too severe on those who were exposed to trials, and placed in difficulties, from which all are now happily exempt.

Queen Anne died : and it might have afforded a lesson to both the claimants to her throne, that she, under whom this country had ranked higher in the scale of nations than at any previous period of its history — under whom the British arms had been crowned with unexampled success — under whom no British subject's blood had been shed for treason — that “ good Queen Anne,” the mild and merciful, sank a victim to mental anxiety, a martyr to the harassing dissensions of her ministers and of her confidential friends and favourites. But when was such a lesson of any avail ? The prize was sought by both parties with unabated ardour ; and Lord Nithsdale's hopes that the title of King James the Third might be acknowledged were quickly blasted.

The Duke of Montrose, true to the Protestant cause, hastened to Edinburgh, there to assist in the proclamation of the

Elector ; and the Jacobites lost no time in communicating with the Pretender.

Both pity and indignation had been roused in the Earl of Nithsdale's bosom, when, upon the queen's death, the King of France intimated to the Chevalier that it was expected he would immediately quit his territories and return to Lorraine ; and when, on the other hand, the King of England refused an audience to the minister of Lorraine till the unfortunate exile was removed from his master's dominions.

That the descendant of a long line of monarchs should thus be hunted from country to country—that the lawful sovereign of one of the fairest realms of Europe should not have where to lay his head, overcame all other considerations ; and it was with zealous passion that he joined himself with the Earls of Mar, Carnwarth, Kenmure, and the other most ardent Jacobites. It was the generous impulse of compassion for the injured,—indignation, reckless of the consequences, which prompted his conduct, rather than hope of seeing their efforts crowned with success.

While others were elated at the unpopularity of the king, whose foreign language, manners, and habits were not calculated to please the multitude, and who, by the favour shown exclusively to the Whigs, had indisposed the Tories, with whom lay the great mass of landed property ; Lord Nithsdale perceived that the new monarch was determined, spirited, and active. While others relied on the secret assistance which Louis the Fourteenth, notwithstanding his engagements with England, afforded to the Chevalier ; Lord Nithsdale was convinced, from the effectual measures taken to defeat them, that the Chevalier's designs must be by some means communicated to the government : and, in truth, the Earl of Stair, the English ambassador at Paris, found means to discover, and transmitted to his own court, all the plans and intentions of the Pretender while yet in embryo.

Not many months after the king's accession, some tumults and riots took place, which tended greatly to raise the spirits of the more sanguine ; and even to Lord Nithsdale himself seemed to augur well for the ultimate result.

Those who celebrated the king's birth-day were insulted ; while on the following day, which was the anniversary of the

Restoration, the whole city was illuminated, and its streets re-echoed with the sounds of mirth and rejoicing.

The government, aware that the spirit of disaffection was making considerable progress, adopted measures of some severity towards the Scottish Jacobites; they resolved that all who were in any degree liable to suspicion should be summoned to appear at Edinburgh, and there required to give bail for their peaceable behaviour.

The Earl and Countess of Nithsdale were one evening on the bowling-green of their castle of Terreagles, watching the gambols of their children; the little Lord Maxwell, a stout bold boy, was exerting all his might to drag one of the garden-seats up the steep grass bank. He had turned it upside down; had stuck in it a tall staff, with a handkerchief for its streamer; and having christened it "his gallant vessel the Royal James," had laden it with all the bowls and bowling-pins he could find scattered upon the grass.

The parents for the moment forgot the disputed succession to the throne, the claims of James the Third, the dangers which beset their country, the perils which awaited themselves — lost in the pride and delight of watching the eager spirited boy, whose sun-burned cheek was flushed with the exertion, every muscle called into action, every sinew strained, as by turns he pushed and dragged, and shoved his unwieldy plaything.

"He is a brave boy, is he not, my lord?" exclaimed Lady Nithsdale, looking into her husband's face, her eyes beaming with maternal pride; "he will not bring disgrace upon the Maxwells! Methinks he may one day fight as gallantly for his king and country as his ancestors have done before him!"

"God bless him!" ejaculated the earl; and he turned half away, ashamed of the emotion which suddenly surprised him.

At that moment a servant approached, and delivered to him the summons issued by government, requiring his attendance at Edinburgh, there to offer bail for his good behaviour, under pain of being denounced a rebel.

"Winifred, my love, the decisive moment has arrived," said Lord Nithsdale, turning to his lady with a sad, a serious, but a determined air. "I am here ordered to Edinburgh — a

summons I cannot and will not obey. I am henceforward a rebel to the existing government. The die is cast. Alas! alas! for this poor land! Let the event be what it may, ruin and desolation must fall on many. Blood must flow!—the blood of our countrymen! Winifred, it is an awful thing to take the first step which must inevitably lead to civil war!”

“Nay, nay, my lord, if our gracious prince but sets foot upon his native land, all loyal hearts will at once acknowledge him. Was not his uncle’s restoration bloodless? and was not the public mind less prepared for such an event than at the present moment? Oh, think more hopefully, my dear, dear lord! The ‘rose of snow’ will be triumphant yet!”

The earl shook his head sorrowfully. “I cannot join in the sanguine hopes of those who think this matter can be brought to a speedy termination. I tremble, Winifred,—nay, do not look at me as though you scarcely believed, and yet blamed me,” he continued, with a smile, in which there was little mirth,—“I tremble for my native land: God knows I honestly and sincerely wish for its welfare. During the just and mild reign of the late queen, it would have gone hard with me to have assisted in any disturbance, for her people were happy; but now, when a stranger and a foreigner persecutes my rightful sovereign—when he is driven, like a hunted beast, from one land to another—when all the persons of note in the country are prosecuted, banished, or disgraced—when my honoured friend and cousin, the Duke of Ormond’s name and armorial bearings are razed from out the list of peers, his achievement as Knight of the Garter taken down from St. George’s Chapel,—no, it is not in mortal man to sit down calmly under this tyranny! I should disgrace my name, my ancestors! Let the success be what it may, it shall never be said that William Maxwell, Earl of Nithsdale, proved false to the cause of his king, through coward fear of the event!”

Lady Nithsdale watched his kindling countenance with love and awe: the colour flushed into his pale cheek; his eyes, so full of care, gleamed from beneath the coal-black eyebrows.

“King James must succeed,” she cried; “a few such spirits as my noble lord’s must carry victory with them. Let the king but set foot in Scotland——”

“Yes, Winifred,” he resumed, and an expression of care again stole over his countenance; “let the king come in per-

son, and come quickly!—but, alas! he is in the hands of those who use him for their own purposes. I fear—but I scarcely dare own the fear to myself—that he lacks that decision, that boldness, that promptitude of action, which in such an undertaking are so indispensably requisite! Why is he not here even now? Why does not the Earl of Mar receive his commission? Yes, Winifred, I tremble. Should we plunge our native land in strife, should the ‘rose of sna’ be indeed ‘steeped deep in ruddie heart’s bluid,’ and should we fail in our object, shall we not have much to answer for?”

At that moment the little Lord Maxwell came running to his parents, breathless and exulting: “I have towed the Royal James safe to land, father; there she is in port!”

“Oh, take this for a good omen, my lord!” said Lady Nithsdale, kissing the boy. Lord Nithsdale shook his head; but bending over the boy, he kissed him likewise.

“Winifred, do you not think your sister Lucy, the abbess, would let them be pensioners in your old convent? I should engage in this business with better heart, if I knew that my boy and poor little Annie were safe in any other land. I would urge your accompanying them,”—Lady Nithsdale started,—“but I know that it would be in vain.”

“Vain indeed!” replied Lady Nithsdale. “In all things else I have been, and I will be, a submissive wife; but do not ask me to leave you, my lord,—I scarcely think I could obey.”

“But the children?”

“Gain but a little time, and we will despatch them to Bruges.”

“I will excuse myself from attending the summons to Edinburgh, will beg the commissioners to take my bail here, at my own castle. This they will refuse; but some days will thus be gained, and we will hope—” he added with a sigh—“and we will hope his majesty will either arrive in person, or we may be authorised from himself to set up his standard openly.”

In consequence of this resolution, the Earl of Nithsdale returned an evasive answer, in which, under the plea of ill-health, (and indeed the mental anxiety which he had of late undergone had somewhat affected his health), he applied to those entrusted with the government in Scotland for indulgence

to have his bail received at Terreagles ; and, in the mean time, the children were despatched, under the care of trusty and confidential attendants, to Bruges, and there placed under the protection of their aunt, the Lady Lucy.

It may well be imagined that such a separation could not take place without a bitter pang to both parents. With Lady Nithsdale it was the instinctive tenderness of the mother which suffered at parting from the objects of her love ; but she looked forward with hope and reliance that the long-desired moment had arrived, that they were at last on the eve of seeing realised the expectation, which in her mind amounted to a kind of religious trust. With her husband the feeling was different.

Lady Nithsdale wept as she bade her children adieu. Lord Nithsdale's eyes were dry. The last sound of their voices, the last embrace, melted away the heart of the mother. The father, silent and almost stern, scarcely heard their parting words ; but as he watched the carriage which bore them from their paternal halls, pass under the archway and emerge into the brighter light beyond, he felt that the heir of the house of Maxwell had for ever quitted the tower of his ancestors ; and that he, by his own act and deed, was about to deprive his child of his home, his heritage, his titles, and his country. Bitter were the thoughts which struggled in his soul. He turned abruptly from the portal, and strode with a hasty but firm step into the withdrawing-room beyond the hall.

Lady Nithsdale followed with streaming eyes ; and winding her arm within her lord's, she spoke of the winning words of their boy, of the pretty grief of the Lady Anne. For the first time Lord Nithsdale forgot to soothe her sorrows, forgot to press the arm that clung to him for support ; but throwing himself into a chair, he hid his face with both his hands, and remained for some seconds absorbed by emotions far more painful in their intensity than the tender regret which drew tears from the mother's eyes.

Those tears were, however, soon dried, for in the fearful grief of her husband she found cause for alarm, which changed the current of her thoughts. " My lord, my dear lord ! " she said, " be not thus moved, the children will do well. See ! I have dried my woman's tears. They will be well cared for by my good sister ; and we shall see them soon again bounding

through the hall, we shall hear their gay voices prattling on the stairs."

"Never, Winifred, never!" he replied, withdrawing his hands, and looking at her with a sad and fixed countenance; "never! I have banished my children; I have deprived my son of his lawful patrimony; I have now driven him forth to beggary, exile, and dependence. No Earl of Nithsdale will ever inhabit these halls again: I know it, I feel it! The lands I inherited from my forefathers must pass to others. Our castles will be desolate, our name extinct! But this is weakness all. I knew I hazarded all earthly goods when I devoted myself to the interests of my king. Alas! If I could but feel assured that I was truly devoting myself to the interests of my king, *and* also of my country, I would not pause to think of my fair castle, my goodly lands!" And his eye glanced quickly round the noble apartment, and dwelt for a moment on the smiling prospect from the windows, where the Nith danced along the valley through banks diversified with fields of waving corn, and luxuriant copses, whose deep green contrasted beautifully with the yellow harvest.

During this momentary silence the distant sound of the bagpipe came fitfully on the ear, as its wild music cheered the reapers to their toil. "Though," he added, "the descendant of a long line of ancestors loves the halls where those ancestors have dwelt,—though the man loves the spot where he has wandered a child,—though," he continued, "a patriot loves the soil which gave him birth; yet," and his voice strengthened, his eye flashed upwards,—“gladly, willingly, gallantly, would I resign them all, were I certain that I indeed strove to secure my country's good, when I seek the restoration of my king.”

Neither the countess nor her lord had ever contemplated the possibility of their deserting the Jacobite party; but they viewed the probable result of the enterprise, in which both deemed it equally indispensable to join, with very different eyes.

Even the success of his schemes did not to him hold out a prospect of certain good. Though a strict Catholic, he was no bigot; and he could not blind himself to the inexpediency of giving a Catholic king to a Protestant people.

To Lady Nithsdale, on the contrary, the peaceful restoration of the Stuarts appeared to be the universal panacea; and she

devoutly believed that if that object could be accomplished without effusion of blood, all orders of British subjects must be good and happy. Little used, however, to join in political discussions, little accustomed indeed to hear them, she did not venture to urge any arguments of her own ; yet she could not remain silent when she saw her lord thus moved, and timidly suggested —

“ You are a true patriot, my lord ; and that you yourself could not be content under the rule of a stranger and a heretic, is surely proof enough that neither could others, who have noble souls, be happy under his dominion. Does England boast any man whose name is fairer, whose character is more unblemished, than the kind, good, generous Earl of Derwentwater ? he whose purse is open to the poor, whose hand is ever ready to assist the unfortunate ? Must not he seek his country’s good ? Is not the Viscount Kenmure’s name a noble and an honourable one ? would he sacrifice his country ? But why should I seek other names than my own dear lord’s ? The Earl of Nithsdale’s is in itself a justification, and a sanction, of any cause he espouses !” she continued with warmth. Lord Nithsdale shook his head. “ Our noble friend, the Duke of Ormond too ! he has joined his majesty at Havre.”

“ Ah, Winifred ! now you have touched the chord to which my soul vibrates. Such flagrant injustice must rouse the spirit in all honest hearts ! Ormond’s name must be restored ! Ormond’s banner must be replaced ! Yes, we are driven to the course we are pursuing : we must proceed. Let us think no more ; but blindly follow where honour, loyalty, friendship, consistency lead us, without anticipating what may be the event ! To-morrow we shall receive the answer from Edinburgh—to-morrow I am a denounced rebel ; I must join the other lords who are already seeking the Earl of Mar. But oh ! Winifred ! would any other general were appointed to the undertaking ! That man has not the head, the heart, nor the character fitting for such a situation. He has zeal, but that is all. The honour—the undoubted, the unquestionable honour is wanting. Was he not one of the first to make protestations of loyalty to the Elector ? and now—— But there is no use in retrospection ; we must on — on — on ! To-morrow, my love, I leave you : how, when, where to meet, is in the hands of Providence.”

Lady Nithsdale's eyes were cast to Heaven, and her hands involuntarily clasped themselves in prayer. "And now, dearest wife," he continued, "we must to business. You are safe here at present. I shall take but four men with me. The inmates of the castle, and the dependants immediately around, are more than sufficient to defend you from any ministers of the law who might seek to make you answerable for the actions of your husband. But, before I go, I must commit to your care the title-deeds to the estates, and the other papers, which may secure to us and to our children some property in case of the worst."

Lord Nithsdale then entered into all necessary details concerning his wishes and intentions, with a firm, methodical coolness, which proved how little he expected ever to return to the happy home of his youth and manhood.

CHAPTER X.

Let us think how our ancestors rose,
 Let us think how our ancestors fell;
 The rights they defended, and those
 They bought with their blood, we'll ne'er sell.
 Let the love of our king's sacred cause
 To the love of our country succeed,
 Let friendship and honour unite,
 And flourish on both sides the Tweed.

Jacobite Relics.

THE messenger returned from Edinburgh, and brought with him such a reply as the Earl of Nithsdale had anticipated. Towards evening, therefore, he made ready for his departure.

The Lords Athol, Huntley, Traquhair, Seaforth, and others, were already gathered round the Earl of Mar, under pretence of joining in a hunting expedition; but, after his refusal to attend the commissioners at Edinburgh, Lord Nithsdale's making one of the famous "Hunt of Braemar" would have betrayed the nature of the meeting. He therefore resolved to seek the Earl of Derwentwater at his castle in Northumberland.

Lord Derwentwater was perhaps of all the Jacobite lords the one with whom his feelings and sentiments were most in unison: even his enemies have never ventured to cast any imputation on the motives and the character of a nobleman of

such known integrity : with him Lord Nithsdale felt he could ever conscientiously act in unison.

Lady Nithsdale assisted her lord in all his arrangements, listened to all his instructions : it was indeed fitting she should do so. The time was past when the wife needed only to be the gentle housewife, the graceful hostess, the dignified countess. Her husband knew well the enduring courage, the calm resolution, which were latent in the soul of his wife ; and in her he reposed entire confidence, on her he placed implicit reliance. But she herself was not aware of the qualities which slumbered within her ; qualities which, had her life been passed in the common routine of polished existence, would never have been awakened and called into action. She trembled as she heard her lord give the directions which he deemed necessary for the security of the castle ; and she shrank instinctively when she saw him gird on his sword, and prepare the pistols which he carried in his holster.

Such precautions, although not unusual in these times, struck her as the real actual commencement of war,—of civil war ; and an icy chill ran through her veins when she heard the balls rattle down the iron barrels of the pistols.

The shades of evening had now gathered around : the four domestics who were to attend their lord were ready mounted in the court-yard ; his own stout horse was there, bridled and saddled. Lord Nithsdale, with a firm and stately step, traversed the dimly lighted apartments. The time for doubt or hesitation was past. There was sadness, but no wavering in his eye. His wife was on his arm, but she pressed it lightly ; she dared not cling to him as her heart would have prompted her to do, neither durst he unman himself by giving way to the tenderness he felt.

When he reached the door, he paused for a moment ; and turning back, he looked slowly round the hall, where hung the portraits of his forefathers, the battle-axe of Eugene Maxwell, the helmet of Lord Eustace, the banner of good Earl Robert.

His eye rested for a moment on the family motto, “*Reviresco.*” “Not here, my love, not in these ancient halls, will the Earls of Nithsdale flourish again !” and gently pressing both the cold trembling hands of his wife between his own, he descended the steps, and, mounting his horse, he rode resolutely from out the castle gate.

It was a glorious summer night. Lord Nithsdale felt, painfully felt to his heart's core, the beauty of the scene, as he traversed the valley from which he took his title, and the lands endeared to him by early recollections, as well as by that consciousness of possession, which assuredly has for the mind of man a charm almost magic in its influence.

The moonbeams slept calmly on the towers of Terreagles, — of his home ! and they sparkled on the waters of the Nith as it bounded through the smiling vale with its green sheep-walks and its wild copses.

Avoiding the town of Dumfries, he followed the banks of the stream, till he found himself under the very walls of his own far-famed Castle of Caerlaverock. It was with a pardonable feeling of pride that the fifth Earl of Nithsdale surveyed, for the last time, the noble edifice which had been the seat of his ancestors for nearly seven hundred years, and which they had rendered famous by many an act of prowess.

The two circular towers which flanked the northern entrance stood out, bold and dark, against the deep blue of the moonlight sky ; the rippling waves were tipped with silver as they broke against the walls of the castle, which, built in a triangular form on the point of land where the Nith throws itself into the Irish Sea, rose on two sides abruptly from the waters.

But though he might cast towards the ruined walls a glance of regret, and might bid them in his heart a long and sad adieu, he reminded himself that the Lord Eustace had in his zeal for King Robert Bruce demolished the ancient fortifications of this same castle, lest the English might garrison it themselves ; and he thought of Robert, the eighth Lord Maxwell, and first Earl of Nithsdale, who had so gallantly defended it for his unfortunate master Charles the First : and in the glorious recollections of former deeds of loyalty, and in resolutions to emulate such deeds, he attempted to drown the sad anticipations which crowded on his soul.

But he was alone ! No eye was upon him ! No enthusiastic Jacobite was by his side, before whom he might blush to own a thought which had reference to self. Each step, as he advanced, was full of the memorials of his ancestors. He passed the Tower of Repentance, — a monument of the ostentatious remorse of John Lord Herries. In the distance he

saw the Castle of Hadham, which came into his family by the marriage of Sir John Maxwell to Agnes, heiress of the Lord Herries of Terreagles. "And the time will come," he thought, "when the Maxwells will be forgotten in a country where they have been known and where they have been honoured, where they have been feared and where they have been loved, for so many centuries ! But if remembered, their name shall never be coupled with dishonour, with treachery, or with disloyalty : " and he spurred his gallant horse, hastening from scenes which, while they confirmed him in his devotion to the cause he had espoused, made him feel the extent of the sacrifice he was making.

Intelligence little calculated to raise the spirits of the Jacobites awaited him upon his arrival at Dilstone Castle, the seat of the Earl of Derwentwater. He there found the earl and all his adherents in the utmost consternation at the death of Louis the Fourteenth, and the refusal of the Regent to assist the Chevalier with arms, men, or money, or to do anything which might be considered an infraction of the treaty of Utrecht.

The Earl of Mar, although not yet provided with a legal commission as general, had set up the standard of King James, and had gathered around it at Braemar three hundred of his own followers. They had all advanced too far to retreat ; but the most sanguine were dismayed and dispirited at the unfavourable aspect of affairs.

Lord Nithsdale alone did not appear affected by the intelligence. Most of the other insurgent nobles were actuated by motives either of ambition, or of revenge, by discontent with their present condition, and by the hope, in the changes consequent upon war, to improve the estates which they found inadequate to the support of their rank and station. But in Lord Nithsdale's mind no personal consideration mixed itself with his conscientious belief that honour demanded his adherence to the Stuart ~~race~~, whether it might be for weal or for woe. His hopes were not blasted, for he had never entertained any ; and on the present occasion it was he who sustained the resolution of those around, and reminded them that the change in the policy of France did not loosen the bonds of allegiance to their sovereign ; that in union and in perseverance consisted their only chance of success ; that to them-

selves alone they must look. "If," said he, "the feeling of the people is really in favour of their lawful monarch, when once the standard is raised, when once the Earl of Mar can show his sovereign's commission, they will declare themselves : if, on the contrary, the mass of the people is satisfied with the present order of things ; if Englishmen are indifferent whether a Stuart or a Guelph wear the crown of England, provided they may enjoy the comforts of life in security ; if loyalty no longer survives in the hearts of those who are occupied only with selfish considerations, French gold, French arms, will never impose upon the British nation the sovereign that nation rejects. In that case we are traitors, and we must abide the consequences !"

It was not long, however, before the success which at first attended the Earl of Mar's strenuous exertions, elevated the drooping spirits of the English Jacobites to as high a pitch of exultation as they had before sunk low in despondency.

He had actually raised an army of ten thousand men ; he had at length received, and read aloud at the head of each regiment, his commission as general-in-chief of the Scottish forces ; and he had despatched to the Chevalier a numerously-signed address, urging the necessity of his immediate arrival in Scotland. Mr. Forster and Lord Derwentwater, with Lord Nithsdale, had proclaimed King James at Warkworth, Morpeth, and Alnwick. They advanced into Scotland as far as Kelso, where they were joined by Viscount Kenmure with two hundred horse, and the Earls of Carnwarth and Wintoun, who had already set up the Chevalier's standard at Moffat.

But these temporary successes could not blind Lord Nithsdale to the elements of discord which were found in the very union which gave the assembled forces a somewhat imposing aspect ; and which, had they with one accord proceeded towards Dumfries, made themselves masters of that town, thus forcing a communication with the main army under the Earl of Mar, might have enabled them to furnish themselves with arms and ammunition at Glasgow, and finally to dislodge Argyle from Stirling.

But he saw and deplored, on one side, the obstinate infatuation of the English Jacobites, who seemed confident that an immediate and universal rising in the northern counties

would be the consequence of their marching into England ; and, on the other, the resolute wilfulness of the undisciplined Highlanders, who declared that they would not cross the border.

The town of Dumfries continued in the hands of government. The Countess of Nithsdale therefore kept herself in strict retirement, nor could she often receive direct communication from her husband. A thousand vague and unauthenticated rumours daily, nay, hourly, reached her ; rumours, which, coming through the medium of the royalists, brought even exaggerated accounts of the disunion and the want of discipline which prevailed among the insurgent forces. Her heart sank within her when, through Amy, she heard how the Whigs had exulted at the confusion produced among the Jacobites by an incident in itself trifling.

Captain Wogan having mistaken some of their own troops for an advancing party of General Carpenter's, inadvertently discharged a pistol, the preconcerted signal to warn those behind of an approaching enemy ; and, until the mistake was discovered, there ensued considerable tumult and disorder among the soldiers in the rear. On another occasion, the cavalry of the insurgents, which had just entered Jedburgh, were hastily marched out again to assist the foot in repelling — a party of their own friends who had joined them by another route ! These, and other occurrences of a similar nature, were subjects of mockery and exultation to the Whigs in Dumfries, and failed not to be goodnaturedly transmitted to the inhabitants of Terreagles. Nor did the letters which she occasionally received from her husband tend to cheer her. Although, partly from prudential motives, partly to spare her the feeling of blank and hopeless self-immolation which pervaded his own soul, he refrained from expressing his full conviction of the inadequacy of their means, the mismanagement of those means which they did possess, the futility of all their endeavours, still she could plainly perceive that his fears, rather than his hopes, had gathered strength since last they parted.

She was one day seated in the tapestried withdrawing-room, from whose large and deep-set windows the Earl had taken his last sad look over his vast possessions ; her eye was also mechanically following the mazes of the Nith as it wound through

the valley below ; when Amy Evans hastily entered, with a joyful countenance, and a thick packet for her lady.

“News from my lord !” she exclaimed, all breathless ; “and Walter Elliot, who is even now from the army, says they are coming to lay siege to Dumfries immediately, my lady ; and we shall have my lord at home again in his own castle. And oh ! how glad I shall be to see my lord’s own noble bearing as he mounts the entrance-steps, and to hear his firm tread as he paces his own hall, and to see my own dear lady smile once more !”

Lady Nithsdale meanwhile had with trembling hands and a flushed cheek opened the packet which Amy hoped would have proved so welcome ; but the words of gratulation died away on her lips while watching the fallen countenance, the blanched cheek of her mistress, as she perused the letter.

“Alas ! my good Amy, you are a flattering, but most false, prophet. The English counsels have prevailed ; they are even now withdrawing the troops towards the borders, and have sent to recall the horse which had advanced as far as Ecclefechan. I never knew my lord write so despondingly. How strange it is, Amy, that when he is there to tell them what had best be done, to point out to them the advantages of occupying all the west of Scotland, of gaining easy possession of Dumfries, of Glasgow, and of Stirling, they should persist in their infatuation. Oh ! if the king were but in Scotland, he would surely know who were his true friends ! Then my lord’s counsels would be attended to, as it is fitting they should be.”

“Indeed, my lady ! And are they not coming to Dumfries after all ? Why, Walter Elliot said it was the talk of all the army ; and that the Highlanders said they would fight the enemy to the last in their own country, but that they never would be marched across the borders, to be kidnapped and made slaves of, as their forefathers had been in Cromwell’s time ! And can it be, my lady, that they will really turn back, when my lord says it is more advisable that they should advance ?”

“Alas ! it is only too true ! My dear lord also says that all will be leaders, and that none will be led. But he adds at the same time, that, whether they follow his counsels or not, he will never desert the true cause from any personal pique.

Oh ! my own true noble lord !” she exclaimed, looking up with tearful yet beaming eyes ; “ there spoke your own high soul ! The king in all his army has not another spirit, disinterested, uncompromising as yours !” Then resuming her letter, she continued, “ My lord says that, notwithstanding all the Earl of Mar’s confident hopes and assertions, he cannot find that the Duke of Ormond has landed yet. ’Tis strange ! it seems as if all aid from foreign shores were spell-bound. He loves his cousin of Ormond ! methinks if he were with them, my lord would have more heart and hope in what he undertakes !” Then, as she proceeded in the perusal of the letter : “ Nay, did I say that there was not another noble spirit in all the king’s army ? Shame on my lips for uttering such treason ! for here my lord writes that he and the Earl of Derwentwater think and feel alike on all things ; and that were it not for his friendship, his support, he should indeed find himself alone. May Heaven bless the good Earl of Derwentwater, if it is only that my lord finds comfort in him ! and moreover, I know full well that he is as brave and as kind a gentleman as ever trod this earth.”

“ And what is to become of us, madam, if my lord and all the army are gone into England ?”

“ We must e’en wait, as we have done, my good Amy ; and abide the result, as we have done.”

“ And must I still see you pine, and pine, and grow thinner and thinner ? Alas ! alas ! these are weary times ! I almost think it would be best to let King George alone upon his throne, and see if we cannot be as happy under him as we were under Queen Anne.”

“ Amy ! you would not be a turncoat, would you ? You, Rachael Evans’s daughter !” answered Lady Nithsdale, in a tone of half-playful, half-serious reproof.

“ Indeed, my lady, I would fain be loyal, for you, and my master are so, and my poor mother was loyal also to the last : but I can never love any king, whether a Stuart or no, as I love my own dear lady, who has been to me as mother, sister, friend, and mistress !” and the warm-hearted Amy kissed the countess’s hand with devoted affection.

“ You are a good girl, dear Amy ; and I do not know how I should bear my present anxiety, and the sorrows that may await me, did I not feel assured I should ever have one true

friend to lean upon in every exigency. Let what will come to us, Amy, I think I may count on your affection as long as I live."

"While there is breath in this body, while the pulses beat in this heart, my lady, Amy Evans shall be true to you and yours, through woe and through weal, for life and for death!"

Lady Nithsdale wept soft tears of gratitude; they rolled down her cheeks, they dropped on Amy's hands as she pressed them in her own, and the true-hearted girl wished not for farther assurances of her lady's affection.

CHAPTER XI.

There's some say that we wan,
Some say that they wan,
Some say that none wan
At a', man!

But one thing I'm sure,
That at Sherriff Muir,
A battle there was
Which I saw, man.

And we ran, and they ran,
And they ran, and we ran,
And we ran, and they ran,
Awa' man.

Battle of Sherriff Muir

THE Duke of Argyle had not yet been reinforced by the Irish or the Dutch troops. This would indeed have been the moment for the insurgents to have made themselves masters of all the west of Scotland; but, as Lord Nithsdale informed his wife, the English counsels prevailed.

Letters were confidently asserted to have been received from Lancashire, declaring that twenty thousand men would immediately join the army upon its appearance in the county; and the various advantages attending a speedy march into England were urged with such vehemence, that the troops most in advance were suddenly recalled, and appointed to meet the main body at Langtown in Cumberland.

But the Highlanders, under the influence of the young Earl of Wintoun, who was intimately convinced of the difficulties into which they were heedlessly plunging themselves,

and the favourable occasion which they were now throwing away, halted a second time. Many then deserted, and chose rather to surrender themselves prisoners, than to go forward to what they looked upon as certain destruction.

The Earl of Wintoun himself, finding that all his efforts to alter the destination of the army were fruitless, returned to the main body, but from that time he was never called to assist in a council of war; indeed, a reckless levity was henceforward visible in his whole demeanour, and he seized upon every opportunity of idle amusement which chance threw in his way, in a manner scarce befitting one engaged in an important and perilous enterprise.

Not so Lord Nithsdale; for having little hope that the most prudent course could have brought the undertaking to a successful termination, he felt less keen disappointment at the rejection of any of his counsels. In sad, but conscientious devotedness, without anger, or personal mortification, he patiently strove to smooth ruffled feelings, to accommodate jarring interests. It was principally through his influence that the ardent and intemperate young Earl of Wintoun had been induced to rejoin his companions in arms; and it was he who prevailed on some of the Highland troops to accompany them, upon the condition of receiving sixpence per day from the time they crossed the border.

The task of tracing the progress of the insurgents through Carlisle, Penrith, Appleby, Lancaster, &c. is relinquished to those who are more capable of describing the military movements and the political intrigues of such stirring times. It is enough for us that the next advices which the Countess of Nithsdale received from her husband were somewhat less gloomy in their tenour. Although the expected risings in England had not proved so numerous, or so general as the Scottish leaders had been taught to expect, still they had met with no serious opposition. They had proclaimed King James at Lancaster; they had levied the public revenue in his name, and they were rapidly advancing towards Preston.

Mar, meanwhile, had established his head quarters at Perth, and he made some attempts to fortify that city, as a place of defence in which the Chevalier might be received upon his expected landing.

The decisive morning of the 13th of November approached,

the day on which the battle of Sherriff Muir was fought in Scotland, and that on which the Jacobites surrendered at Preston in Lancashire.

In the battle of Sherriff Muir the Earl of Mar displayed that energy, and that decision, which are requisite qualifications for the head of an insurrection. His eloquent and animated address to the chieftains in the council awakened a corresponding ardour in the bosoms of all, except, perhaps, of Huntley and Sinclair; and when he wound up his appeal by briefly stating the question in the words, "Fight, or not?" the whole assembly answered at once with an universal shout of "Fight!"

This resolution, reaching the lines as they were drawn up in order of battle, was welcomed by loud and continued huzzas, and a general tossing up of hats and bonnets.

Such demonstrations of eagerness for the onset promised well for the result, and for a time the insurgents bore down all before them. But, though the left wing of the Duke of Argyle's army was routed, his right wing, in its turn, put to flight the left wing of the Earl of Mar's; and to the English remained the solid fruits of victory, inasmuch as they retained the position by which they defended the Lowlands. Both generals, however, claimed the advantage; and to a party which had struggled with so many adverse circumstances, the fact of having withstood the royal forces in a pitched battle, gave some confidence for the future.

To Lady Nithsdale's hopeful heart the battle of Sherriff Muir appeared a glorious victory, which was to change the aspect of affairs. With the buoyancy of youth and loyalty, she exulted in the idea that her husband and the Scottish army were marching triumphantly through England, while the English army was sustaining a defeat in Scotland. She dwelt with pride and delight on the individual acts of prowess which came to her knowledge; and Amy hastened to her lady with every fresh piece of intelligence she could collect from chance-comers to the castle gates, thus endeavouring to beguile the tedious hours of sickening expectation, and hope deferred, in which her mistress wore away her days.

"Did you hear, my lady, how the M'Leans with one accord joined their old chief the moment he set foot among them? for all the isle of Mull belongs now to the Duke of Argyle himself."

"Indeed, Amy! And so the tie of clanship was stronger than interest, or than duty to their new landlord. And, moreover, Sir John M'Lean has been living for many years in France, and on an allowance too granted him by Queen Anne."

"However that may be, he soon raised a regiment of eight hundred men, and when they were prepared for battle, all the speech he made them was, "Gentlemen, yonder stands Mac Cullummore for King George, and here stands M'Lean for King James. God bless M'Lean and King James!—Charge, gentlemen!" and on they rushed like wild creatures. It was in that very charge the gallant young Clanronald was killed by the heavy fire of the regulars. But Glengarry would not give them time to be disheartened, but cried out, 'Revenge! revenge!—to-day for revenge, and to-morrow for mourning!'"

"Yes, yes! there is some of the true spirit left!" exclaimed Lady Nithsdale, exultingly: then, with a changed voice, she added, "But, alas! for young Clanronald: he was a brave youth, and, I have heard my lord say, a complete soldier; he had been trained in the French guards. When he received the Earl of Mar's summons, he replied, 'That his family had ever been the first on the field and the last to leave it!' and he has proved but too well that he was a worthy scion of that noble house!"

"Yes, my lady; and they say that as he fell out of the ranks, after he had got his death wound, the Earl of Mar met him, and asked him why he was not in front. 'I have had my share,' said the poor young man, and dropped dead at the earl's feet. Oh, my lady! a battle is a shocking thing! and though one is so glad to hear of a victory, and one thinks nothing of hundreds of the enemy being killed, yet when one pictures to one's self one fair and gallant youth lying pale and stiff, and cold and bloody, on the bare ground, oh! one's heart sickens within one, and one wonders how one could ever wish the king should come back among us to cause bloodshed and slaughter!"

Lady Nithsdale answered not. The words "pale, and stiff, and cold, and bloody, on the bare ground," had conjured up an image to her mind which seemed to curdle the very life-blood in her veins. She clasped her hands closely, and pressing

them tightly on her knee, she sat with fixed eyes and lips compressed, striving to exclude from her mind thoughts which would rush into it.

“ Oh, say no more, dear Amy ; I cannot, must not think. Each day, each hour, may bring us news of a battle in England. How do we know what may be the result ? Alas ! if it were not for the blood which runs in my veins, — if I were not a Herbert, — if I were not married to a Maxwell, I too might wish that—— But no, I will not utter what would be, in me, a dereliction of duty, — treason to the cause my lord upholds. I will remember that my lord has done that which he deemed it his duty to do ; and for the event, we must leave it to Providence. We must submit, and only pray for strength to perform the part that may be allotted us, whatever that part may be. It is but two days since I received such a letter from my dear sister the abbess as should teach me to trust and to submit. Oh ! if I could but look as she does, on all earthly and temporal concerns ! but, alas ! how can one wean one’s self so entirely from this world, when it contains one’s soul’s treasures ? Lucy has no husband ! Lucy has no children ! Alas ! these ties hold me down so tight to earth, that not all her holy counsel, not all Father Albert’s ghostly advice, are enough to detach my heart from it : I cannot fix my thoughts, as they bid me, on Heaven, and Heaven alone.”

“ Nay, my lady, nor is it fitting you should. It is for priests and nuns to be so much better than other people : it would never do for those who have to wrestle with the world as it is, not to have their thoughts somewhat in it.”

“ Yes ; but Amy, the more our affections are set upon things which are not of this world, the more thoroughly we shall be enabled to do our duty here.”

“ I am sure my lady, there is no need for anybody to do their duty better than you do ; and whichever way your heart is set, it must be the right way ;” replied Amy, whose devoted attachment was such that she did not like to hear it implied, even from her lady’s own lips, that she was capable of improvement.

“ I must not value myself according to your estimate, Amy,” replied Lady Nithsdale, smiling, “ or I shall be sadly lacking in that first of Christian virtues — humility.”

It was not many days after the battle, or, as the Jacobites

termed it, the victory, of Sherriff Muir, that vague rumours reached Terreagles of disaster and defeat at Preston.

Lady Nithsdale was struck with the pale countenance of Amy when she had summoned her, ostensibly to assist in arranging some household matters, but more, in fact, that she might hear a friendly voice, and look on an affectionate countenance. She was still more struck with the haste in which Amy wished to depart, instead of gladly lingering, pleased and honoured at being admitted to share the counsels and the feelings of her mistress.

“Think you not, Amy, that these damask hangings will make my lord’s apartment look exceedingly handsome? and to my mind the old pictures which adorn his study will show well upon the deep crimson. He will be pleased, when Heaven vouchsafes him a safe return, to find we have been mindful of his comfort. I would gladly turn these hangings to so good account. What think you, Amy?” and Lady Nithsdale gazed inquiringly in her face.

“Yes, madam, in sooth they are as good as new,” replied Amy with a hurried voice; and her eye avoided that of her lady: her fingers trembled as she smoothed the fringe, and she kept her head bent low, as though examining the texture of the damask.

“Amy, you have heard ill news that you fear to communicate,” said Lady Nithsdale, laying her hand firmly on Amy’s trembling arm, and looking at her fixedly. “Speak! I charge you, speak! I can bear anything but suspense. Let me know the worst!” and she grasped her almost convulsively.

“Oh, my lady, do not look thus at me: truly you fright me. In very truth I know nothing, nothing for certain.”

“Amy, Amy, this is not like yourself; you are trifling with me!”

“We must not heed every silly report that comes from so far off, my lady.”

“Then it is of the army in England!” and Lady Nithsdale dropped into a seat. “Speak! speak! tell me all!”

“Indeed I have but little to tell. They said there had been an engagement: but we have often heard that before, my lady; and people make so much of a little thing; and the news comes through Dumfries, and the people there tell everything their own way.”

"And they say, then, that we have been defeated!" continued Lady Nithsdale, striving to appear perfectly tranquil.

"Tell me, Amy; you see I am quite calm."

"Why, yes; I suppose it is as your ladyship says, for they seem marvellously well pleased."

"And are King James's forces retreating?"

"Not that I know of, my lady."

"What, do they still hold Preston, then?"

"Why no, my lady. I believe what they call the Royalists have possession of it now."

"Then where is our army?"

"Alas! dearest madam, I cannot justly say. Indeed, indeed, my lady, those who told me do not seem to know themselves, and I dare swear it is not half true."

"Amy, you have heard more; I am sure you have! Is my lord——? Have they told you anything? I cannot, cannot ask. Oh, Amy! answer me, and answer the truth, or I think I shall die!"

"Nothing, my lady! They never mentioned my lord's name one way nor another; indeed, indeed they did not."

"Thank Heaven so far!" and Lady Nithsdale closed her eyes for a moment, as if to regain composure and resolution.

"And you know, my lady, ill news travels fast enough, and everybody hereabouts would be curious enough about my lord: so pray set your mind at rest."

Lady Nithsdale looked at Amy with a sad withering smile. "At rest, Amy! at rest!" and pressing her hand upon her bosom, "it is long since this heart has been at rest, and I am much mistaken if it will be so for many a long day yet. If there is any truth in what the people of this country call second-sight, I have much to suffer yet; but I will not despair. I place my reliance above; I will confide in Him who will not abandon the humble, even when all human succours fail."

CHAPTER XII.

When the day is gane, an' night is come,
An' a' folk bound to sleep,
I think on him that's far awa,
The lee-lang night, an' weep, my dear,
The lee-lang night, an' weep.

Jacobite Song.

It is singular how the first vague rumour of a great event travels faster than can almost be accounted for by human means, and how much time sometimes elapses before the real and authentic account is received ! Two nights and a day of dread and uncertainty did Lady Nithsdale endure before any farther details reached Terreagles.

The honest Amy's face soon betrayed that fresh intelligence had arrived, and that intelligence unfavourable. Almost before her lady could question her she said,

“ My lord is well, madam ! my lord is safe ! ”

“ Oh, dearest Amy, thanks ! ” and her eyes flashed with joy. “ But why this sad countenance then ? Look cheerful, girl, for your face belies your words. You are not deceiving me ? ”

“ No, no indeed, madam. He is unhurt : not a wound, nor a scratch, as I believe. ”

“ Then why can you not smile ? Oh, Amy ! at this moment I feel how weak a sentiment is loyalty to one's king, when put in the balance with love for one's husband ! Still no smile ! Why, we have changed characters, Amy, and you are going to school me into my due allegiance. ”

“ Oh, my sweet lady ! I joy to see a smile upon your lips ; and I dare not finish my tale, for I shall banish it more quickly than I have called it up. ”

“ You said he was unhurt ; not a scratch, you said ? ”

“ I did, my lady ! but oh ! can you not guess what other misfortune may have befallen him, and all of us ? — oh, my lady ! ”

“ I am dull of comprehension ; but I cannot picture any great evil now my lord is safe ! ”

“ He is safe, now, madam, unhurt, unwounded ; but—— ”

“ But what, Amy ? Speak ; you distract me ! ”

“ But, madam — dear madam — he and all the other lords — are — prisoners, madam, — prisoners to King George ! ”

“Prisoners!” and she seemed to awake as from a trance. “Prisoners to King George! then rebels! traitors! Fool that I have been! and my thought never glanced towards this! Oh! to whom can I apply for advice or for assistance? Alas, alas! what can a poor weak helpless woman do? If I had wings to fly to my lord, then he would tell me how I might assist him; — then at least I should be near to soothe and to support him! But here, alone, and helpless,” she added, wringing her hands, “what can I hope? what can I effect? — But you know more, Amy; you can tell me more?”

“No more, madam, than that the Scots were the last to come to terms and to surrender.”

“And they surrendered! yielded themselves up to the Whigs! Oh, my dear, dear lord, what must thy noble spirit have endured ere it was bowed to this! How must thy counsels have been scorned, thy hopes blasted, thy heart crushed! I know thy lofty nature well, and truly my woman’s soul almost refuses itself to picture what thine must have undergone!”

Amy stood for some moments bewildered, and unable to offer consolations which she felt must be unavailing. Then, resuming her self-possession, she urged: “Think, madam, how much worse it might have been! you forget that my lord is safe in person.”

“But, Amy, what he must have suffered in mind! And what are bodily sufferings to the tortures such a mind is capable of enduring!”

“There is one thing, my lady, for which we cannot be too grateful. He is now safe from the dangers of battle: think how you felt when we were talking of young Clanronald, so fresh, so blooming on the bloody sod!”

“True, true!” and she looked up for a moment. “But—” and she lowered her voice—“there are other and more inevitable perils than those which are met with in battle. If, indeed, the usurper keep the throne, — if the new dynasty prevail — then loyalty is treason, and treason, treason, Amy! — Even King James spared not his own nephew; can we expect more mercy in the soul of a stranger than in one of our own royal blood? — Oh Heaven, be pitiful!”

“Nay, madam, but the Duke of Monmouth was the usurper himself. This case is quite different! And then

there are so many of them. Mr. Forster, and the Earl of Derwentwater and his brother, and the Lords Wintoun, Carnwarth, Kenmure, Nairne, and many, many more of noble and gentle blood. King George, if indeed he is to be our king, must show mercy. He could not have the heart——” Amy dared not finish the sentence: she could not have uttered, her lady could not have listened to, the termination their imaginations but too well supplied.

Lady Nithsdale bowed her head in silence, and Amy feared to break in upon the sad solemnity of her thoughts. After a pause, the countess slowly rose: “I will to my closet, Amy, and there tell my beads, till I have regained composure enough to think. But fail not to let me know should farther intelligence reach the castle.”

Amy opened the door for her lady, and as she passed, she kissed her hand in token of obedience to her injunctions. Lady Nithsdale pressed her’s, and slowly, steadily withdrew. Amy watched the closing door; and then giving a full vent to her own repressed feelings, she wept and sobbed in freedom.

Every hour now brought fresh reports, each more distressing than the last. One told how fourteen hundred men were inclosed in one of the churches, where they suffered both hardships and indignities from the soldiery; how they were stripped, not only of every article of value which they might have about them, but almost of necessary clothing.

These were principally Scotch, who, having been the last to surrender, were treated with the greatest rigour; and Lady Nithsdale shrunk with almost equal horror from the idea of her noble husband being exposed to the insults of the low-born and the mean, as from the more tremendous vengeance of the law.

Another report reached Scotland, that the rebels were to be tried by martial law, and shot upon the spot. But the alarm which such a notion was calculated to excite, was in some measure allayed, by learning that this summary punishment was only to be inflicted upon those who had actually held commissions under the government, against which they had borne arms. Lady Nithsdale was farther re-assured, when the name of Lord Charles Murray was the first mentioned as likely to suffer, for she knew well that her husband’s could never have been omitted had he been in danger of such a fate.

But still she heard not from himself, and these varying and often contradictory rumours almost wore away her soul in feverish anxiety.

The town of Dunfries was in the hands of the Royalists, and it was a matter of difficulty for the prisoners to transmit any communication to their friends, which was not subject to the revision of those who were in power. There was time for each hope, in which she had formerly indulged, to be successively crushed. That which she had fondly imagined to be a victory at Sherriff Muir proved in its consequences to be no better than a defeat. Dutch reinforcements joined the royal army; while scarcely a day elapsed in which some of the Lowland chieftains did not desert the standard of the Earl of Mar.

Still no succours arrived from France. It became known that the regent Duke of Orleans had proscribed the Chevalier, and still the Chevalier's arrival was delayed.

Lady Nithsdale roamed about the vast and deserted halls; the un-read book dropped from her hands; the once loved spinet remained unopened; the needle, which she used to ply so rapidly and so dexterously, was still resorted to for occupation; but the flowers no longer grew under her fairy fingers, and the falling tears would often tarnish the colours of the silks before the leaf had yet assumed its form. She started at every noise: the changing cheek, the fluttering heart, the trembling finger, the faltering voice, all spoke the heart ill at ease. The long, long days wore wearily away; it seemed to her that each dismal winter evening closed in more slowly than the last.

Her children were far away; she could not visit their couches, listen to their tranquil breathing, and beguile the hours in watching their unconscious slumbers. Her existence would have been less irksome had there been any duty for her to perform, any exertion to be made; but in this forced inactivity of body, while the mind was distracted with doubts and fears, she endured, not so much the pangs of hope deferred, as those of protracted disappointment.

Watching the blazing logs on the hearth, and listening to the incessant whistling of the December blast, only varied by the rattling of a dry and withered stray leaf against the casement, she had sat through the early and lengthened twilight

of a Scottish winter's evening. Glad of the excuse of fading light to indulge in the idleness of vague, dreamy, but most sad meditation, she had allowed the night to steal upon her un-awares, till all without was darkness that might be felt, and the stone mullions of the oriel windows alone shone white in the fitful blaze of the wood fire.

She was startled from her reverie by the sound of men's voices, and the tread of a strange and heavy foot. The attendants entering, explained that a peasant was without, who insisted upon seeing the countess.

"It is the countess herself that my business is with," said the stout and rosy boor, who forced his way past the serving-men; "I was to come to the speech of the lady herself; and if you can certify to me that yonder she is, why I am ready enough to give up my packet; but I shan't let it go to any of you. How do I know what sort of jackanapeses you may be?" and the peasant grinned good-humouredly, with a twinkling eye, which led to the conclusion that he had not journeyed so rapidly, but that he had taken time to refresh himself by the way. He held a packet in his hand: "If it is true that you are that rebel lord's lawful wife, why, here's the letter I was to deliver safe into her own fair hands—that was, when she gave me the reward I have earned by a journey of some hundred and fifty miles."

"Oh, give it me! in mercy give it me!" exclaimed Lady Nithsdale; and starting from her seat, she would have snatched it at once.

"Softly, fair lady," cried the peasant, withholding it; "where is the reward the gentleman promised me?"

"Oh! you shall have anything you will, only give it—for pity, give it me! Amy!" she cried to Amy Evans, who, never far from her lady's side, had by this time made her appearance; "fetch my casket: nay, here, take the key, and bring hither my purse; it is in the embossed casket, and give the fellow what he will. And now, my friend, the letter—the letter."

"I think the lady's one that loves him; but nobody has yet assured me that she is his lordship's wife," continued the undaunted boor, with a knowing glance round the room: "all wives are not in such a taking about their husbands," he added, wishing, with a sort of low craft, which he deemed

prudence, to delay delivering the letter till he had made sure of the money.

"Oh, trifle not with me! Give it me, as you hope to meet with mercy yourself!"

"Well, here it is, then; the poor soul shall have the letter any how." She snatched it quickly from his hand, and throwing herself upon her knees before the fire, she hastened to devour its contents. Her eyes, blinded by tears, could not decipher the lines as fast as her wishes prompted.

"Bring lights!" she exclaimed; "why are there no lights?"

The servants hastened to fetch the tapers; and the peasant remained near the door, watching the lady with an expression half compassionate, half comic.

"Sure enough, the poor soul loves that darkbrowed fellow," he muttered; "she tucks back her hair, as if she could tear off the curl that falls between the fire light and the paper; and she thinks no more of me! But I shall not depart without the pay I have been promised, I can tell her."

Amy re-entered with the purse at the same moment that the serving-men returned with lights; and Amy, showering into the hands of the messenger several gold pieces, led the way into the hall, that her lady might be left to peruse her packet in privacy.

The peasant clinked the money in his hard palm; then looking cunningly at Amy, "Your lady said I should have what I would."

"Well, and have I not rewarded you handsomely?"

"Why, pretty fairly, pretty fairly; but I should not mind another gold piece or so. You must bear in mind that my journey has been somewhat perilous, all through the royal armies and the loyal inhabitants, with a letter in my pouch from a rebel lord to a rebel lady."

"Nay, you are unreasonable, you should not be covetous: but here are a couple more, for my dear mistress will not think anything can be too much for one who brings her news from her husband."

"Thanks, fair mistress! I am one who always keep the eleventh commandment, even if I keep no other."

"The eleventh, fellow! Why, Protestant and Catholic agree there are no more than ten!"

“ Ah, but I know the eleventh, and I know it best of all, and so do most people ; and if they all kept the ten others as strictly as they do that one, why the world would be a better world than it is, that’s all ! ”

“ You speak in riddles, friend ; explain yourself.”

“ ‘ Get all you can, and keep all you get.’ Did you never hear that before, mistress ? if you have not heard it, you have practised it, I warrant me. But where’s your buttery-hatch ? I am spent with hunger, and ’specially with thirst.”

While Dickon, the Lancashire ploughman, was restoring the strength, which did not seem to be much impaired, the countess was absorbed in the long-wished for epistle.

The letter was sad, almost hopeless ; but it was from himself, and she gazed with delight on every line traced by that loved hand. The first impulse was that of joy ; it was not till upon consideration and reflection, that she found in it matter for deep sorrow and despondency. It ran thus.

CHAPTER XIII.

Nor can any men’s malice be gratified further by my letters, than to see my constancy to my wife, the laws, and religion. Bees will gather honey where spiders suck poison. — *Eikon Basilike*.

“ DEAREST WIFE,

“ You will have heard from other hands the ill success of our expedition. My Winifred, who knows what have been my fears from the beginning of this undertaking, also knows that my mind has been prepared for the result, and will therefore be aware that among all his sorrows her husband has not had to endure those of disappointed hope. Let her then be assured that his heart, though grieved, is unsubdued ; and that his soul is fully made up to meet with constancy whatever may occur to himself.

“ As my dear wife may well believe, I have suffered much. I have seen counsels which appeared to me the most imprudent, and which the event has proved to be such, invariably prevail. I have seen every opportunity of success neglected. I have seen, without the power of preventing it, rashness,

where prudence should have ruled ; deliberation, where boldness and decision would have been true discretion.

“ But, as my Winifred knows, it was not with the expectation of ultimate success that I devoted myself to the cause of my king. I obeyed what I believed to be the call of duty, but I may have been mistaken. When I have seen the blood of my countrymen stain their native soil, then indeed I have felt doubts, agonizing doubts, as to the correctness of my judgment. I have looked on death before ; I have served in Germany ; I have been an eye-witness of assassinations in Italy ; I have seen criminals pay the forfeit of their lives ; but, in the solitude of a prison, it is the image of the first victim of civil strife that haunts my imagination, — that moment, when I saw one of our own Scots fell with his battle-axe a fellow Scot ; when I heard one foeman utter a threat, the other a cry for mercy, in the selfsame tongue ! I still see the dying glance of that blue-eyed youth, the life-blood staining his fair crisped curls : in the heat of battle the impression was momentary ; but now, in darkness and in silence, that image rises up between me and sleep !

“ It is only to my beloved wife, who has so long read every feeling of this wayward heart, that I dare confess such weakness. To my companions in arms and in misfortune such sentiments would appear the sickly phantasies of a distempered mind : even to her, I will dwell on them no longer.

“ My Winifred will have learned with pride for the land of her husband, that the Scots were the last to yield at the fatal affair of Preston : indeed, all our party fought with unequalled bravery ; each several street was obstinately defended. General Willis’s troops set fire to the houses betwixt themselves and the barricades ; but we still fought all night by the light of the conflagration, and we had the advantage in every several attack. Yet what could be done by a small body of men, cut off from all assistance, and cooped up in a burning town !

“ The English were for submission, while our brave men were for rushing on death, or regaining liberty by one desperate sally. The English accomplished a capitulation ; but Forster’s life was near becoming the sacrifice ! Many of our Scots still loudly accuse him of treachery ; and Murray levelled a pistol at his head when he heard what was the mission on which Oxburgh had been sent to the English general. Had

not a friendly hand struck the weapon upwards, Forster must then have fallen ! But I sincerely believe that he has acted with loyalty and sincerity throughout. When the cause is hopeless, is a commander justified in wasting the blood of those under his command ? Each of us, individually, may prefer death to submission ; but has a general a right to sport with the lives of others ?

“ Should my Winifred have an opportunity of seeing our king, — who, though his coming is now too late, must, I imagine, be by this time in Scotland, — it would be but justice towards a man, who, though unfortunate and perhaps ill-judged, is, I believe, a faithful servant of King James’s, to let his majesty know that such is my impression.

“ We have not yet been told our ultimate destination ; but we conclude we shall be conveyed to London, there, — let not my dear wife be startled, for she must be aware it is the inevitable consequence of defeat — there to take our trial. Let her rather rejoice that it is in an honourable, though perhaps a mistaken cause, that her husband will appear before the tribunal of his country ; and that among his fellow-prisoners he may count the noble Earl of Derwentwater, the good Viscount Kenmure, and many more of unsullied honour.

“ When I make use of the word ‘ prisoners,’ let her not picture to herself handcuffs and irons, a dark and damp dungeon : we are poorly lodged, it is true, but we are not deprived of necessary comforts. If I could see my Winifred —— ! But that is now impossible.

“ She may rely upon my summoning her when there is a hope of her being allowed to cheer me with her presence. I should think myself unworthy of her true and devoted affection, if I did not place on it the implicit reliance which it deserves. Adieu, my beloved ! I know that, next to Heaven, I am ever in your thoughts ; neither do you need to be assured that you are loved with equal truth and fervour. Professions are needless between those whose souls are united as ours have ever been ! And yet there is a satisfaction in tracing with my own hand the words which I trust will reach my Winifred’s eyes, — that whenever, however, death may meet me, my last prayer shall be for her, my last thought on her, and that I firmly believe the affection which fills my soul must survive death

itself ; that I am, and ever have been, her true and faithful husband,

“ NITHSDALE.

“ P.S. I hope I have engaged a countryman of these parts to convey this safely to your hands, under the promise of a handsome reward upon the safe delivery of the letter.”

Full many a time did Lady Nithsdale read over the assurance of that affection which she never doubted. She laid the precious document next her heart ; and then she summoned once more the English peasant, who she thought had probably beheld her lord with his own eyes.

He was ushered into her presence ; and never did two human beings form, in their outward appearance, a more striking contrast, than the pale, slender, high-born countess, whose anxious countenance bore the traces of deep feeling, whose transparent complexion varied with every word she uttered, whose shrinking form seemed as if every breath of wind might blow it away, while the light which shone from her eye spoke a soul capable of withstanding the storms of adverse fortune ; and Dickon, who with stout and sturdy limbs, and a ruddy countenance, beaming with health and good cheer, mixed with a sort of rustic, merry cunning, stood unawed before her.

“ You saw my lord your own self, did you not, my good friend ? ” inquired Lady Nithsdale, with a degree of timidity and anxiety in her tone.

“ An’ it please your ladyship,” answered Dickon, with a scrape of the foot and a pull of the hair, “ I saw a many of the rebels, great and small, one day, when they were changing their quarters.”

“ But it was my lord himself, the Earl of Nithsdale, who entrusted you with the packet you brought even now ? ”

“ Yes, I take it, it was ; for the packet was directed to the Countess of Nithsdale, and the gentleman told me to take it to his wife, and to be sure and give it into her own hands, without fail, myself ; and he said, if I did, I should be sure to get a handsome reward ; that nothing would be too good for me, and such like, he said. He was a civil-spoken gentleman, and very free of his promises.”

“ You have been rewarded for your pains, I hope. I gave

orders to my waiting-woman to see to your wishes in every respect."

"Oh! she is a smart lass, that, and she behaved very civil to me, and I'm no ways dissatisfied. Only perhaps a trifle from your ladyship's own fair hand; she is but a waiting-woman after all," added Dickon, not forgetting the eleventh commandment, and making another scrape, which he meant should savour of gallantry.

Lady Nithsdale slipped some additional gold into his hand. "And did my lord look well?" she inquired.

"Yes, very well, my lady, as far as I know. Just as well as the other lords he was along with; only a trifle paler. He did not look, my lady, as if he had visited his own buttery-hatch quite so lately as I have."

"Alas! was he very pale? Tell me, in pity tell me all the truth."

"Nay, madam! don't put yourself in such a fluster. He looked pale, just like all the rest of them."

Lady Nithsdale turned away for a moment. She could scarcely endure to commune with one who saw in her noble husband but a man, like other men: and yet this peasant had seen him, he had heard his voice; from him alone could she hope to learn any particulars. Dickon, who was not wanting in natural shrewdness, perceived that his answers did not give entire satisfaction; and when Lady Nithsdale again turning towards him inquired whether her lord moved with a firm step, or whether his health did not appear to have suffered from long confinement, he answered,

"Oh, bless your heart, my lady, he walked as strong, and looked lusty and hearty; quite different from the other lords! Oh! he's a fine gentleman sure enough, and looked more like a prince than anything else."

"He has a noble carriage, in good sooth," rejoined Lady Nithsdale; "and sorrow has not yet subdued his lofty bearing?"

"Lord save you, my lady! he was quite of a different sort from the rest of them. They seemed like rabble by the side of him: anybody might have known him among a thousand!"

"They might, indeed. And when he spoke did his voice sound full and mellow as ever?"

"Why, he spoke somewhat low, for he did not wish every-

body to hear ; but methought it was a marvellous good voice, quite different from the other rebels."

Lady Nithsdale hung upon his words with delight, and forgot that at first she had thought him incapable of estimating her lord's superiority over his fellows.

"And can you tell me how my lord was lodged, and how he is attended?"

"Why, as I have heard say, very well lodged ; not so handsomely as he would be here in such a castle as this, but right well lodged as times go ; and they say that the rebels they live like fighting-cocks, and there is revelry of all kinds going on among them. But that's among the young lords," added Dickon, who saw he had not now touched the right string ; "not my Lord Derwentwater and my Lord Nithsdale, they are quite of another sort ; but some of the young gallants, and young Bottair of Athol—Oh ! he's a comely young fellow that !—and they do say that pretty Kate Musgrave——"

The countess began to think she had conversed long enough with the trusty messenger, especially after his supper at the buttery-hatch ; and repeating her thanks in the manner most satisfactory to the worthy Dickon, she dismissed him to seek the repose he must need after his journey.

The Chevalier's arrival, which Lord Nithsdale in his letter had considered almost certain, had not yet taken place : and although the Earl of Mar was resolved, by keeping possession of Perth, to retain at least one town where his master might be sure of an honourable and safe reception, the defection of the whole clan of Fraser, the advance of the Earl of Sutherland, the reinforcements which strengthened the Duke of Argyle's army from the regular troops, whose presence was no longer required in England, rendered each day the situation of the Jacobite general more desperate.

Still, having formally invited the Chevalier to put himself at the head of the insurrectionary army, Mar felt himself under the necessity of keeping his remaining troops together, to protect the person of the prince when he should effect his landing. In this dilemma, he proposed a military oath in the name of King James the Eighth ; but the attempt to bind together those who were only waiting for an excuse to disperse proved as unavailing as his previous proposal of an

association. All the principal chiefs and leaders complained that they had been deluded by promises which had never been fulfilled. They insisted—and there was much reason in their arguments—that they had no more grounds for now believing the king was on the point of arriving, than that the long promised arms, ammunition, and treasure, should be sent from France; and from this period a party was established in the very army of the Earl of Mar which declared for opening a negotiation with the Duke of Argyle.

CHAPTER XIV.

Since I parted hence,
I have beheld misfortune face to face;
Have mark'd the ills of desolating war
In all the sad details kings never see.
The sun that rises on the peasant's toil
In happy lands not visited by war,
And gilds their waving harvests with his beams,
With barren splendour glares on desert fields
Depopulated by the sword. — The gale
Sweeps sullen o'er them, loaded with the cries
Of frantic widows and of orphan babes,
That else had borne upon its gladsome wing
The careless carol of the husbandman,
Tilling in peace and liberty his field.

Gonzalvo of Cordova.

REPORTS of the indignities to which the noble prisoners had been exposed on their journey to London failed not to reach Scotland; indignities which, galling enough in themselves, were not likely to be softened in the recounting.

Upon their arrival at Barnet, they were all, without distinction of persons, pinioned with cords. By some of the younger and more hot-headed of the noble rebels this humiliating ceremony was not submitted to without remonstrance and resistance. Lord Nithsdale simply remarked to the Earl of Wintoun, “Degrade not yourself, my friend, by bandying words with those who are appointed to execute the behests of their superiors: the disgrace is on them who exult in this unworthy triumph; not on us, who are thus triumphed over. Surely, Seaton, you would rather endure, than inflict, such insults.” Presently, however, he added, while he held his hands to have the cords attached, “I grant you I should be sorry my wife should witness this. My gentle Winifred! thy shrinking, sensitive pride would never brook seeing thy

husband thus manacled. For the first time I rejoice that thou art far, far away."

At Highgate the prisoners were met by a large detachment of horse grenadiers and foot-guards, and here a halter was placed around the neck of each horse, which was held by a common soldier, walking by its side.

In this mode did they make their entrance into the metropolis, accompanied by a concourse of people shouting at them and reviling them ; some loading them with abuse, others singing scurrilous songs, and many beating upon warming-pans, in allusion to the popular notion concerning the birth of the Chevalier.

With these increased indignities the spirit of Lord Nithsdale was excited. As he rode on, his carriage became each moment more lofty ; his dark brow assumed a more awful gloom ; his eye, from beneath its shade, flashed defiance on the mob ; his nostrils dilated ; the curl of his contemptuous lip plainly expressed how utterly he despised the mean taunts of the senseless rabble ! Thus erect, undaunted, he passed on through the crowded suburbs ; but before they entered the streets, a separation took place between those whose destination was different.

General Forster and Brigadier Mackintosh were taken to Newgate, some to the Marshalsea, some to the Fleet ; while Lords Nithsdale, Derwentwater, Kenmure, Widdrington, Nairne, &c. were conveyed to the Tower.

The moment of parting from their companions in misfortune, those with whom they had shared hopes and fears, with whom they had enjoyed triumph and endured defeat, was one of bitterness ; a parting, too, which to all might be, and to many proved, an eternal one ; one which took place under the gaze of an insulting populace, and under circumstances which admitted of no word of kindness, no last injunction, not even the pressure of the friendly hand !

At that moment all former differences of opinion were forgotten ; the prudent counsel neglected, the headstrong perseverance in contrary measures, the impatient rejection of advice, the contempt of timely warnings, all faded from the mind. As the different bands receded from each other's view, they saw but the trusted companion in arms, the fellow-sufferer, endeared by similar misfortunes.

The Earl of Nithsdale and the other noblemen proceeded towards Westminster Bridge, where, according to custom, they were placed in a government barge, and were rowed down the river to the Tower. The boat shot London Bridge; it was admitted through the Traitor's Gate; and, as it darted from the open daylight under the three low and gloomy arches, each prisoner cast a lingering look behind him, and as he withdrew his eyes, met those of his companions.

There was no need of words to express the feelings of that moment; each read his neighbour's but too plainly in his own; each was aware the other felt he had taken his last look at the free bright world without the prison walls. And, alas! to more than one was it indeed but too truly his last glimpse of freedom; more than one was doomed never to pass those barriers, but to take his trial at Westminster Hall, and then to mount the scaffold upon Tower Hill.

Not a word was spoken. The plash of the waves against the stone stairs, as the sudden entrance of the barge into the narrow landing-place caused the muddy sullen water to overflow the bottom steps and as quickly to recede, the hollow echo of the oars as they were shifted, were the only sounds heard.

The barred gates were unlocked, and the prisoners, one by one, mounted the dank steps, and emerged into daylight, opposite the Bloody Tower. They heard the portals closed and barred behind them; they heard the splash of the portcullis as it was let down into the water, and each was then delivered over to the warder in whose apartments lodgings were assigned to him.

As long as he remained exposed to the observations of others, the most acute physiognomist could not have perceived any alteration in the countenance of the Earl of Nithsdale. He had, as it were, set his features to an expression of calm contempt and stoical endurance, which he would allow no circumstances to alter. With a firm step, a lofty unbarrassed air, he followed his guide into the small and narrow apartment which was destined to his use. He showed no emotion when the cords were removed from his wrists, and he replied with punctilious politeness to the civilities of the warder.

At length the door was closed upon him, he was left in

solitude ; no eye was upon him, and he was able to relax for a moment from the imperturbable composure which he had forced himself to maintain. He hid his face in his hands, and allowed the thought of his beloved wife, the memory of his innocent children, whom he perhaps was never, never more to behold, to rush over his soul !

With what tenderness did the recollection of home overpower him ! — the thousand every-day enjoyments, which are not prized till they are lost !

The current of these enervating thoughts was checked by the sounds of steps upon the stairs, and he had only time to resume the unmoved countenance he had before preserved, when the entrance of some menials and attendants again forced him to repress the emotions, which, though repressed, could not be extinguished.

The bringing in of his few necessary packages, the arrangements for his personal accommodation, the preparations for some refreshment, were all inexpressibly irksome to him ; and he impatiently awaited the welcome solitude of night, when he might revel in the luxury of thinking of the happy past, the wretched present, the fearful future, without a witness.

It was at this moment of general dismay, when, as we have already mentioned, each day saw the gradual diminution of the Earl of Mar's army ; when the greater proportion of the most zealous Jacobites were already in the hands of government ; in the midst of increasing disaffection among his remaining partisans ; that the unfortunate descendant of the house of Stuart landed in his native country, at Peterhead, on the 22d of December, in the year 1715.

He arrived almost as a fugitive. He had been obliged to traverse Normandy in disguise ; his retinue consisted but of six gentlemen ; and when the Earl of Mar, the Earl Marischal, and some others, to the number of thirty, went from Perth to kiss the hand of the prince for whose cause they were in arms, they found him at Fetteresso, suffering with a severe attack of ague.

Neither in body nor mind was he capable of inspiring his adherents with the ardour which could alone turn or even arrest the untoward course of events. Mutual discouragement was the feeling consequent upon this melancholy meeting. The unwelcome news which awaited the Chevalier,

that, for a month previous to his landing, the resolution had been taken to evacuate Perth, did not tend to dispel the despondency natural to him ; while in the speech which he made to the privy council, whom he had immediately proceeded to name, the despairing view which he took of his own situation pierced every moment through the words of hope which he thought himself bound to utter. He closed his address by saying, " That for him it would be no new thing to be unfortunate ; his whole life, even from his cradle, had shown a constant series of misfortunes ; and he was prepared, if it so pleased God, to suffer the extent of the threats which his enemies threw out against him."

With a spirit thus crushed by repeated disappointments, and a constitution impaired by illness, did this ill-fated prince proceed to enact the sovereign to a diminished and dispirited party of disunited followers.

The intelligence of his arrival was speedily communicated to Seaforth, Huntley, and all the other chiefs who had formerly flocked to his standard, and who had withdrawn, wearied out by his protracted delay ; but they were summoned in vain, none of them heeded the notice.

Preparations were made for King James's coronation at Scone ; a day of thanksgiving was appointed for his safe arrival ; prayers were offered up for his majesty in all the churches ; the currency of foreign coins was enjoined ; and the convention of the Scottish estates was called together.

The Countess of Nithsdale experienced a momentary sensation of hope and exultation when she heard that the monarch to whom all belonging to her had been so constantly devoted had actually set foot in the realm of his ancestors ; and her generous heart throbbed with indignation when she heard of the nobles who neglected to obey his summons. She thought how different would have been the conduct of her own brave lord ; and she resolved to do as, if he had been at liberty, he would himself have done, and as he seemed, by what he said concerning General Forster, to expect her to do. She therefore prepared herself for journeying to Scone, there to pay the homage she conceived to be due to her lawful sovereign.

She travelled privately, not to attract the notice of the royalists ; but as she passed through the country which lies between Stirling and Perth, all was one scene of desolation.

By an edict of James's, the villages of Auchterarder, Blackford, and Dunning, and other hamlets, had been destroyed by fire ; houses, corn, and forage had all been laid waste, lest they should afford quarters to his enemies.

Helpless women and desolate children had been deprived of their homes ; the blackened walls of the buildings which had been burnt contrasted cheerlessly with the snow which covered the ground.

Lady Nithsdale's journey was one of sorrow and dismay. She thought upon the days of her youthful enthusiasm, and she looked into her heart in vain to find it there. She remembered how in her Flemish convent her girlish heart had beat when she imagined her king actually on British land, and herself a witness of the joyous restoration ; and her childish dream was fulfilled, the king was

Hame, hame, hame —
Hame to his ain countree :

but misfortune, disappointment, time, had worked their effect ; and with her husband a prisoner, her children banished, her country laid waste, she could not work up her feelings to the pitch of loyalty which she deemed it her duty to have experienced.

At length the fair town of Perth rose to her view, and the broad Tay swept gracefully around it. She saw the ancient palace of Scone, the spot where all the Scottish kings had been crowned, and she tried to feel assured that " the king would enjoy his own again."

That night she took up her lodgings in Perth ; and the following day she repaired to the royal palace of Scone, there to kiss the hand of her monarch.

She felt an universal trepidation ; not so much from the awe which majesty inspires, as from the fear of seeing her king in a condition so unbecoming his dignity. A noble mind shrinks from seeing nobility degraded ; and she felt more abashed at the poor attendance around the king, and at the want of state in his appointments, than others do at all the pomp and ceremony of the most gorgeous and splendid court.

The Chevalier received the Countess of Nithsdale with what he meant to be marked attention ; but his manner was subdued, his bearing dejected ; partly through his late illness, and partly from that consciousness of being marked out for

misfortune, which pervaded his every look, his every action. There was a melancholy majesty in his thin person, and his handsome but pale features, which (although united with a certain stiffness and reserve, little calculated to find favour in the sight of the adventurous and the desperate who alone adhered to his cause,) interested Lady Nithsdale, while it saddened her.

The Earl of Mar presented her to the Chevalier, whom, upon her entrance, she found engaged in conversation with the Earl Marischal in one of the windows that overlooked the flat country between the palace and the Tay. She dropped upon both her knees, overcome with emotion at finding herself in the actual presence of her king, and with grief at the desolate appearance of all around him, of all without and all within his residence.

He quickly raised her, and imprinting on her marble forehead a royal kiss, he professed his satisfaction at becoming personally acquainted with one, whose family had ever been faithful servants to his own.

The measured expressions chilled her ; she had never before looked upon the sacrifices made either by the Herberts or the Maxwells but as the performance of a bounden duty, in which they had not failed ; but when these sacrifices seemed to be considered in the same light by him for whom they had been made, their magnitude and their extent increased in her eyes. The Chevalier then inquired whether she had received news lately from the earl her husband.

Her eyes filled with tears ; the inquiry was made in so cold, so formal a tone : “ But once, sire, since he has been a prisoner ; ” and had she at that moment attempted a longer sentence, her voice would have failed her altogether.

“ We hope that the worthy lord’s health continued unimpaired by confinement ? ”

She struggled with her feelings, and replied, “ My lord complained not of any personal privation or hardship. His thoughts were all, as they have ever been, for his king, his country, and his faith ! ”

“ It is now many years since we once had an interview with the Earl of Nithsdale in Flanders ; and if our memory does not fail, we were then suffering from this same agueish complaint which discomposes us at present. Methinks our health

is always least fitted for exertion and fatigue when circumstances call most imperiously for both ! But so it has ever been with us !” He sighed, and his eyes instinctively sought the ground. Then turning again to the countess, “ Is your ladyship’s seat situated far from hence ?” he inquired, for, a stranger to Scotland, he knew not the topographical details of the country.

“ Please your majesty, I journeyed from my husband’s castle of Terreagles near Dumfries.”

“ We hope your journey was prosperous and agreeable, although we fear in this weather it must have been somewhat tedious. Dumfries is some days’ journey hence, I fancy.”

Lady Nithsdale thought upon the villages in ashes, the desolated fields, and could not find words for her reply, but contented herself with bowing assent. When, turning to the Earl of Mar, the Chevalier remarked, that if the present severe weather continued, the Tay would soon be completely frozen over. “ In that case,” he continued, “ the river will no longer be serviceable as a protection and defence.”

“ Neither will it be any impediment to the design I have been explaining to your majesty,” replied the earl in a low voice.

Lady Nithsdale soon after retired from the royal interview, discouraged and dissatisfied. She had never found the desired opportunity of speaking her husband’s sentiments concerning General Forster ; and she now felt intimately convinced how wild and hopeless an enterprise it must ever have been, to replace on the throne one who was so little calculated to conquer or to win it.

CHAPTER XV.

Nay, heed them not, fair Margaret ; true, they are
Untutor’d, and in ’haviour surly, rough ;
But they have hearts, nor unacquainted are
With sturdy charities and strong affections —
As oft within the prickly husk lies lapt
The sweetest kernel.

Unpublished Poems.

THE Countess of Nithsdale had intended to return for the present to Terreagles, till she could ascertain what course

would be most pleasing to her husband, when, upon her return from Scone, she received a letter from the Duchess of Montrose, which decided at once what was the line of conduct it now became her duty, as well as her inclination, to pursue. The duchess's epistle was conceived in the following terms: —

“ Though the late unfortunate events have separated Christian Montrose from her dear Lady Nithsdale, her friend and cousin must not imagine that she has forgotten the happy days she spent at Terreagles, or that the affection she then professed has aught abated. Trust me, dearest cousin, I have felt for you, as I am sure you would have felt for me, had the cause you have espoused proved successful, and had my husband been the sufferer in that which he esteems the just one.

“ At my earnest request, my lord duke has constantly made inquiries concerning the prisoners in the Tower, and your good lord arrived there in health and safety on the 10th. I understand he is not inconveniently lodged, and I do not learn that he is in want of any necessary comforts; indeed, many of your party who have been slack in openly joining the insurrection, make peace with their consciences by supplying the Jacobite prisoners with money and luxuries of all kinds. I have heard say, that when in the streets it has been difficult to procure silver for a guinea, in the various prisons change for large sums might be procured in silver and in gold. They say also, that among the more wild and thoughtless of the prisoners, much mirth and revelry prevail; and, as I hear, they so confidently rely upon the merit of their unconditional surrender at Preston, that they trouble themselves but slightly concerning their approaching trials. It is reported, that the Earl of Derwentwater observed to your good lord, that many of his followers were fitter inhabitants for Bridewell than a state prison.

“ Let not my dear cousin be needlessly alarmed, when I tell her that the lords will be impeached on the 10th of January, and that I have reason to believe my Lord Nithsdale would not now deem it unadvisable that she should repair to London. Indeed, I am informed that his most earnest wish is to see her; and I have no doubt that, supposing the result should not be so favourable as many of the more sanguine are inclined to believe, her presence may prove of service as well as of comfort to her lord.

“ I should advise her to lodge herself privately, as, to my poor way of thinking, any appearance of rank or splendour may not be agreeable to those in power ; and I think I am not mistaken when I say that the riotous mode of living of many of those in confinement does not serve to forward their cause.

“ I would myself have visited the good Earl of Nithsdale, that I might have informed you how it fared with him, had it been fitting that I should do so openly ; but my lord duke deemed such a measure would not be advisable ; and as to visiting him privately, I feared that you and others might have suspected your noble husband of having learned from young Bottair of Athol, that a prisoner may be a very dangerous gallant, that —

‘ Stone walls do not a prison make.’

“ ‘ Mad-cap Christian,’ as you called me once at Terreagles, is not so void of discretion as to run the risk of being taken for one of the ‘ divine Altheas ’ who come ‘ to whisper at the grate.’

“ Indeed, I am sobered since those days ; and these are times which may make the most unthinking reflect. Sad or merry, thoughtful or giddy, my heart is still with my dear cousin, and she may count on my willing services should the time arrive when they may be useful. She will not fail to let me know when she reaches London ; and meanwhile she will believe me her faithful and affectionate friend

and cousin,

CHRISTIAN MONTROSE.”

This letter had followed Lady Nithsdale from Terreagles, which had occasioned some delay in its coming to hand. It had been brought by Walter Elliot, an old and trusty servant, who had been ever in the confidence of his master, and on whom Lady Nithsdale had relied for advice and protection since the absence of her husband.

Her resolution was instantly taken ; with Amy Evans and Walter Elliot she determined at all hazards to set forth upon her journey : but in the condition of the country at that period, means of conveyance were not easily procured ; and it was highly expedient she should escape all observation : she

therefore gladly availed herself of such steeds as Walter Elliot could procure in the exigency of the moment, and although totally unaccustomed to horse exercise, proceeded in this manner as far as Newcastle.

She there parted with the horses, and took the stage, thinking she should thus travel more expeditiously ; and trusting that, when quite beyond the boundaries of Scotland, she was not so likely to be recognised. Such had been the tumult of her feelings, she had scarcely had time to be conscious of fatigue or cold, or to be aware of the strange and unusual companions with whom she was occasionally brought in contact. When, however, she found herself enveloped in her cloak, her hood brought low over her face, and ensconced in a corner of the heavy and lumbering vehicle, she found leisure to think, to feel, and to suffer.

The capacious coach contained several other passengers, but Lady Nithsdale heeded them not : their discourse turned chiefly on the comparative merits of different breeds of cattle and sheep, on Scottish Kyloes and Cheviot mutton, and she knew not what words they uttered, till her attention was suddenly arrested by one of them remarking, " The last time I journeyed along this road was some six months back ; I had been as far as Hawick to buy some of those famous north-country sheep, and, to be sure, all those parts were in a fine disturbed state. I was obliged to come back without the sheep. Some thought their property was safer in sheep than in money, for whichever side got the upper hand, butchers' meat would still be wanted ; others thought they should be sure of a good price when there were two armies, as it were, in the neighbourhood, and they asked twice their worth for the sheep. As for me, I would not give much hard money for the creatures, which might be taken from me, and killed, and then what should I do ? There's no telling in troublous times what's justly the value of any thing, so I had my journey for my pains ! and as I came back, those rebel lords were going about proclaiming their mock king, and a pretty penalty they are likely to pay for their folly. Why could not they be quiet, and enjoy themselves at their own great houses, where they say the Earl of Derwentwater lived like a prince, and was beloved by great and small : and why could not they let us enjoy ourselves too ? Farming went well while

good Queen Anne lived ; crops were pretty fair, and prices held steady, and I don't know what folks would have more, not I ! ”

“ Well, it all bids fair to be quiet enough now,” replied a rough-looking farmer who sat opposite ; “ they'll settle old scores with them all. They have made away with a pretty many of them at once at Preston ; and I know for certain that the king means to have off the heads of every one of those he has got up at London now, so they will make no more disturbance ! ”

Amy turned an uneasy glance upon her lady, whose bosom she could perceive heaved rapidly beneath the folds of her cloak ; but her face was towards the window, and the black hood concealed it from all within the coach. She feared to draw attention upon her, and she remained tranquil.

“ Nay, I can't think the king will have all their heads off either,” rejoined the first spokesman. “ Why, there are as many as twenty lords, to say nothing of knights, and gentlemen, and members of parliament, and such.”

“ I have been informed that such are his most gracious majesty's intentions,” answered the yeoman, with the importance of a privy-councillor.

“ For God's sake, what is your authority ? ” exclaimed the Countess of Nithsdale, unable any longer to control her feelings.

“ Young mistress, I do not consider myself called upon to give up those who tell me a bit of news.”

“ Well, neighbour, you need not be so touchy about your news ; who knows but the young woman may have a friend among some of the rebels, and she need not be the more of a rebel herself ! Brothers and sisters, fathers and sons, have taken different sides, but they are not the less relations for that. Ah ! that's one of the misfortunes of these civil wars ! They're not like a good war with the French, or the Dutch, or the Spanish ; when you know for certain that every *parlez-vous*, and every *mynheer*, and every *Don*, is your enemy. But when people of one country take to fighting, why, if you chance to be in a battle, you don't know who you may be killing ; and if you chance to tell a bit of news promiscuously, you don't know whose feelings you may be hurting. Folks should not be over free of their speech in these times ; and, I

ask your pardon, neighbour, but you should not be so positive about what such as you and I can't know. Don't you look so sad, mistress. How should we, any of us, know what the king's thoughts are?"

"But we may know those who do know what the king's thoughts are: not that I wish to hurt the gentlewoman's feelings." And the farmer relapsed into silence, somewhat offended at the doubt with which his annunciation of the sovereign's private sentiments had been received.

"Are you from Scotland, madam?" resumed the good-natured yeoman, whose curiosity was somewhat awakened by Lady Nithsdale's evident emotion.

"Yes, sir," answered Amy quickly. "My friend and I come from Scotland last, but we are natives of Wales;" which, although strictly true, would, she imagined, lead their new acquaintances from suspecting who they really were.

"And are ye for London now, my pretty lass?"

"Yes, sir; our friends live in London now."

"If this snow goes on falling at such a rate, why, I think we shall never get to York; and as for you, you will never get to London. I'll be bound the stage will be stopped to-morrow. I declare there's no making out the hedge from the ditch, the snow has drifted so in some places. I don't know that I ever remember such a hard winter as this has been. My poor ewes!" he continued, shaking his head, "I fear I shall have bad luck with them! However, 'tis as the Lord pleases! I dare say 'tis all for the best. If we have quiet times, and we have nothing to fight against but the seasons, as God sends them to us, we shall do well enough. As long as we are in the Lord's hands, and have only the troubles He sees fit to try us with, and none of those man makes for himself, it will all be right! Is not that true, young woman?"

"Indeed, sir, I am no judge of public matters," replied Lady Nithsdale in a faltering voice, for she felt that it had been the Jacobites who had disturbed the public tranquillity; and true and reasonable as was the sentiment expressed by the yeoman, she could not echo it without throwing blame on those she most loved and honoured, or without belying the opinions and the feelings of her whole life.

"Humph!" replied the yeoman: "I do not call those public matters. I think I have said nothing but what every

good Christian should say amen to. I don't see how anybody can help saying 'tis better to be in the hands of the Lord than of men, not I."

"Nor I, indeed!" exclaimed Lady Nithsdale with fervour. "O Lord, take us into thy hands, and deal with us according to thy mercy!"

"Well, that's much what I said, only not in such a way. Verily, if I don't believe she is one of the new Dissenters that have sprung up of late!"

Amy Evans, anxious to withdraw observation from her lady, asked him some question concerning his flock; and, affecting great interest in such matters, she was enabled, from her youthful Welsh education, to converse with sufficient knowledge of the subject to lead the honest unsuspecting farmer into a detail of his own plans and systems, in which he readily forgot what had at first excited his surprise in the bearing of the silent and serious young gentlewoman.

By the time they reached York, his prediction concerning the weather was fully verified: the wheels of the heavy vehicle could scarcely cut through the deep snow; and so slow was their progress, that it had long been dark before the stage arrived at its destination in one of the most dismal streets of the ancient city of York.

The snow continued to fall during the whole of the night, and the next morning the roads were found to be so totally impassable, that not only were all stage-coaches and carriages of every description arrested in their progress, but the post itself was stopped.

Lady Nithsdale's disappointment amounted almost to despair. Every hour was precious. The letter which announced her husband's wish to see her had already been somewhat delayed on the road, and the duchess said that on her exertions might depend the mode in which his case might be looked upon. She thought, too, on his desolate, his forlorn condition; she judged from her own feelings how intensely he must desire her presence; and she deemed any hardship, any suffering, preferable to the mental anxiety of being shut up in York, unable to hear of him, to communicate with him, to exert herself for him.

The long period of suspense and of forced inactivity which she had passed at Terreagles had been almost insupportably

irksome ; and now, when her lord had expressed a wish for her company, when possibly she might be of real service to him, to be imprisoned in a dismal room in an inn at York : — it was an infliction not to be endured.

She again employed Walter Elliot to procure three saddle-horses ; and, in spite of his dutiful remonstrances, and all unused as she had ever been to brave the inclemencies of the weather, or to encounter any bodily fatigue, she set off on horseback, through roads in which the snow often came up to the girths of the saddle. To Amy, who had been a mountain-bred lass — who had often wandered about her native hills on the rough Welsh ponies — the undertaking was not one of such difficulty ; though she feared the strength of her delicately nurtured lady would never stand such hardships ; but the soul which animated that apparently fragile form was such as to communicate to the frame some of its own power and elasticity. As they rode out of the town, the sun shone forth in dazzling splendour upon the brilliant whiteness of the scene. The roof of each house was clothed with a thick soft covering of newly-fallen snow, which the smoke of the town had not yet tarnished, though the power of the sun had already melted it in some degree, so that each gable was ornamented with a fringe of long pendent icicles. As they quitted the town and waded through the obstructed road, still the same dazzling whiteness presented itself to their view : the load which bent down the branches of the trees was not yet dissolved ; and when the small birds, twittering in the welcome sunshine, lighted on a feathered spray, they shook from it a shower of bright snow-flakes.

To a mind at ease the scene was beautiful and cheerful ; and Lady Nithsdale in the midst of her sorrows felt grateful for the cheering light and for the clear pure atmosphere.

CHAPTER XVI.

The drowsy night grows on the world, and now
The busy craftsman and o'erlabour'd hind
Forget the travail of the day in sleep :
Care only wakes, and moping pensiveness. — ROWE.

THE sun was now midway through its course, and their progress had been but slow. “ Is not my dear lady in need of

rest ? ” inquired Amy Evans, as they approached a small village, at the entrance of which there was a newly-painted gaudy sign of the King’s Head.

“ No, Amy, no ; I need no rest. The consciousness of drawing nearer to my lord is rest enough for me.”

“ But, honoured madam,” interposed Walter Elliot, “ it were not ower wise in us to push our steeds too hard. They dumb creatures are but flesh and bluid like our ainselves ; and should they chance to knock up, what shall we do, I’m thinking. ’Tis weary wark for them lifting their hoofs eighteen or twenty inches through the snaw every step they take. An’ it please your leddyship, we had better gie them a rest at yon bra’-looking inn.”

“ Not there, good Walter, not there. Look at that flaring sign ! A little farther on there is another place of refreshment ; ’tis but an humble one I grant, but at this moment any one will be more welcome to me than this.” And she averted her eyes from the “ King George’s Head,” in large and golden letters, which adorned the front of the building. The place she had selected was indeed but a wretched ale-house, and they only stayed there long enough to allow the animals necessary food. She was impatient to be gone ; and as they seldom could proceed beyond a foot’s pace, they were still some miles from their destined resting-place for the night when the short day had closed in ; the sun had already set crimson beyond the cold snowy fields, and the clear deep blue of the heavens was spangled with innumerable stars.

The cold was piercing ; and her attendants shivered, and wrapped their cloaks closer around them. At length they passed a blacksmith’s forge ; and the bright sparks which darted upwards through the chinks in the roof, the ruddy light which flared through the open door, the clear blaze of the fire itself, looked invitingly warm. Amy could not help remarking to Walter Elliot how comfortable and tempting was the interior of the forge.

“ Art thou cold, my poor girl ? ” inquired the countess.

“ Why, madam, of a surety the wind is very sharp ; I should have thought your ladyship would have felt it more keenly than myself, who have not been so softly reared. I have been regretting all the day that we forgot to bring your mantle lined with sable, which her grace of Montrose sent you last winter.”

“Nay, heed me not, good Amy : I thought not of the cold — But now you speak of it, the night is frosty.”

“I have been fain to ask you, honoured madam, where your ladyship means to abide when you reach London ? ”

“In truth, Amy, I cannot tell ; I thought but of seeing my lord : when once in London, I felt I should be near to him ; but it is more than probable they will not allow me to share his prison, and I suppose I must seek lodgings. Her grace of Montrose bade me live privately, and advised me not to affect any state in my accommodations : but I am little used to the bustle of a crowded city, and scarcely know how I must proceed.”

“If your ladyship will excuse my boldness, I have been thinking that I know of some one who might stand our friend. Does not your ladyship recollect, when you were in Wales, just at the entrance of the village, about a mile from Poole Castle, a low white house, with a high tiled roof composed of many gables and strange angles ? Two goodly cypress trees grew before the windows on each side of the gravel walk which led to the porch, and the trim garden was fenced from the road by a low stone wall, and a laurustinus hedge within. Your ladyship must remember they were the finest laurustinus’ in all the country, and they were always the first in bloom in that sheltered spot.”

“Yes. I think I remember the white house, Amy ; the sun seemed ever to shine upon it, and make it gleam white against the green hill which rose behind.”

“Sure enough, madam, that was it. The midday sun shone full upon it, just about the hour your ladyship and your honoured mother were used to take your customary airing. And do you not remember, madam, a tall pale gentleman, who wore his hair parted up the middle of his forehead, and hanging long over his ears : it was silver-white, for he was very old ? ”

“Oh, yes ! I recollect him well, for he used to lean over the gate that opened upon the road, and watch our carriage as it drove by. He always bowed with a respectful yet a stately air to my mother as we passed : and I well remember her saying he had been a cavalier in King Charles the First’s time, and she regretted that his increasing infirmities did not allow him to visit her, for she would have been proud to receive

under her roof one who had been a faithful servant to his master in times of trouble. If I mistake not, my mother said that when quite a youth he had been one of the gallant cavaliers who rode post, along this very road, to carry to the king at York the news of each day's proceedings in the parliament. Would we had their steeds, and their strength ! by this time we might have reached London."

" Well, madam, this old gentleman had a young daughter, who was little older than myself. Her mother had died early ; and the old gentleman had no companion but the merry maiden, and the merry maiden had none but her reverend but melancholy father. She made acquaintance with me one May morning, when we were gathering cowslips and primroses for our garlands. I was to be queen, and she gave me all her posies to help adorn my crown ; and when we all came round, a troop of laughing girls with our garlands, Colonel Hilton gave me a gold piece. After that we often met ; and as the colonel found that my mother was looked upon more as a friend than as a servant by the honoured duchess, and as I was somewhat better taught than other maidens of my degree, he would often let us pass an afternoon together, and young Mrs. Mellicent Hilton would teach me some of her songs, and read to me from her beautiful books, and in return I instructed her in many curious stitches and rare sorts of embroidery ; and thus we whiled away the hours ; and she promised that we always should be friends, though she was a lady, and I but the daughter of a menial. She married a Mr. Morgan a few months before your ladyship came into Wales : they said the old cavalier did not over well like the match, for Mr. Morgan's family had turned against King James the Second ; but he was a well-favoured young man, and Mrs. Mellicent, poor soul, saw no one else, so it was but natural she should incline towards him.

" The poor old colonel died soon after ; but before he died he grew quite fond of his son-in-law, and he left all he had been able to save of his property to him and to Mrs. Mellicent, provided they added his name of Hilton to that of Morgan. I have since heard that Mr. Morgan is in favour with the new people, and that he has a place about the new court, so I think she must have it in her power to serve us ; and if Amy Evans's old playmate, Mrs. Mellicent, has not quite forgotten

the pleasures and the pastimes of her youth, I am sure she will have the inclination to do so."

"My good and thoughtful Amy! and do you know where Mrs. Morgan now resides?"

"Yes, dearest madam. 'Twas only in the last letter I received from Wales, that I learned many of these particulars about my old friend, and that she was just settled in her new house in Bloomsbury."

"But if her husband is so staunch a Whig, 'tis more than probable she will look coldly on me, who am the wife of one whom she thinks a rebel."

"Nay, madam, but she loved her good old father dearly, though she would have been loth to give up her sweetheart for what then seemed a by-gone matter. She would affect you none the less for being of the same way of thinking as the parent to whom she was ever a dutiful child; and, moreover, the world may work great changes in the hearts of those who live in it, but Mrs. Mellicent Hilton's must be sorely changed indeed if she is not one whose eyes will overflow at any tale of woe, and if she will stop to calculate the chances of success before she troubles herself to assist a fellow-creature in distress. Her old father used often to bid her have more discretion in her kindness, and to tell her she gave her alms to those who least deserved them: but she never could say "no" to any one that asked charity in a piteous tone of voice, and the very dogs about the white manor-house were kept so fat by Mrs. Mellicent that you might tell them from any others by their good case. And then, madam, it seems to my poor judgment, that one who knows something of the court, and yet is not so very great as the Duke of Montrose, or his lordship's cousin her grace of Buccleugh, or the Earl of Pembroke, or any of those nobles, may prove of service in a quiet way, when such great people might fear to attract notice."

"There is much truth in what you say. You have a pertinent judgment. Amy, and it may be of good avail; we will think more of this. But we are drawing near our place of destination. See! by the lights gleaming from so many windows, this must be a considerable town. Walter, is it not here we are to pass the night?"

"Yes, madam. Your leddyship maun set up here for the

night, an' it so please you. I weel know, for one, that my puir nag could na' carry me a mile farther."

The snow became less deep as they approached the metropolis, the roads more beaten, and they were enabled each day to compass longer journeys. On the evening of the 23rd of January they entered London.

Lady Nithsdale's first impulse would have led her to the Tower, but it was too late to hope for admittance, and she thought that from the Duchess of Montrose she was most likely to learn how it fared with her husband, and what steps it might be most advisable for her to take.

Leaving Amy, therefore, to make what arrangements were necessary for their accommodation, she instantly took coach and proceeded to the residence of the Duke of Montrose. She sent word by a servant to the duchess, that a person desired to see her grace upon business of importance, and with the message she gave a written billet entreating to see her in private. She did not sign the paper, not feeling assured how far any communication with the wife of a state prisoner might compromise the duchess herself. She was certain that the sight of her hand writing would procure her instant admission ; and yet the few moments she passed waiting in the street were spent in a state of mental agitation which surprised herself.

It was a painfully new situation for the daughter of the Duke of Powis, who was thoroughly imbued with the indelible nobility of aristocratic birth, to find herself alone, in a hired coach, as a suitor at the door of one with whom she had ever lived on terms of equality and intimacy. It was not that she doubted the kindness, the sincerity, the generosity, of her good friend and cousin ; but she now felt more lost, more unprotected, in the busy, noisy, thronged streets of London, than she had done in all the difficulties of her perilous journey.

Only a few moments, however, elapsed before the portals were thrown open, and she found herself ushered through the rank of powdered liveried domestics, who in those days were deemed indispensable appendages to the great, into a small ante-room on the ground-floor.

Lady Nithsdale sank on a seat, bewildered, overcome. It all seemed to her like a strange dream. What news might await her ! Three weeks had elapsed since the date of the duchess's letter — what fearful events might not have occurred !

The door opened ; the duchess appeared, beautiful, brilliant, blooming, glittering in diamonds and jewels, and rustling in satins and point-lace. " My sweet cousin ! my dear Winifred ! " exclaimed the duchess.

" Oh, Christian ! dearest friend ! " and Lady Nithsdale rushed into her open arms, and wept upon her neck.

For twelve days body and mind had been upon the stretch, and the words, the tones of kindness at this moment of exhaustion, completely unnerved her. " How is he ? " she inquired, as she sobbed upon the duchess's bosom.

" Well, dear cousin, well. Compose yourself ; why is this, my gentle, staid, tranquil cousin of Nithsdale ? These tears, this trembling, do not promise well for the work you have in hand."

" True, true ! " exclaimed Lady Nithsdale, " it is over ! 'twas but a momentary weakness. I have ridden a weary distance to-day," she continued, attempting to smile, and hastily pushing her hair off her brow ; " and with a heart not well at ease," she added, pressing her hand upon her bosom, as if to still its throbbings : " but tell me all ; I am ready now to hear and to endure. On the 10th they were impeached," she said firmly and resolutely ; " of course, my lord pleaded guilty."

" He did. Last Thursday, the 19th, when the lords sent in their reply to the impeachment, your noble husband, with Lord Derwentwater and Lord Kenmure, pleaded guilty to the articles exhibited against them. Lord Wintoun alone on various pretences petitioned for longer delay."

" I knew my lord would never deny the share he took in this sad business," exclaimed Lady Nithsdale, with a confidence and pride in his integrity which for a moment overcame her fears for his safety. Then she added, in a tone which seemed to ask for reassurance, " Surely this plain-dealing, this honesty, cannot indispose the king ! His surrender at Preston ——"

" Yes, yes, we will hope for the best," interrupted the duchess, anxious to evade the question, for she was too well aware that the Earl of Nithsdale was looked upon with fear and suspicion ; and though she could not bring herself to crush Lady Nithsdale's hopes, she dared not encourage them, — " only be calm and prudent."

" Trust me, I am now firm and resolved : I am ready,

even impatient, to be stirring in my husband's service. It was the sight of you, dear cousin, and the kind tones of your sweet voice —— ! ”

“ Well, no more of this : I will see you to-morrow, when we will confer more at large : I must not now delay. I am to court to-night, as you may perceive by all this gay apparel ; my lord duke is there already in attendance, and I must not be late. But, before I leave you, let me enforce one thing ; I fear they will refuse you admittance to your husband, unless you consent to share his imprisonment : this must not be ! You must remain at liberty, or we cannot concert our measures ; you must yourself see and speak with some I will name to you. I have assurances that the king will show mercy to several of the prisoners ; but still we all know the good Earl of Nithsdale has many enemies, and there is the more need you should be in freedom to use your influence with them. Remember, that for his sake, you must not preclude yourself from serving him far more effectually than you could by sharing his prison. ”

“ Trust me, my dear friend, I will obey your injunctions. Whatever it may cost me, I will turn back from his prison-door, if it is for his good that I should do so. May Heaven bless and reward you, dearest cousin ! ” and she seized the duchess's hand and pressed it to her heart.

“ ' Pshaw ! silly Winifred, you need not thank me yet, ” replied the duchess, half turning away, and brushing off a tear ; “ you must not make me weep before I go to court, or my eyes will make no conquests to-night, and my lord duke, who loves to hear me praised, will be angry with you, fair cousin. I must stay with you no longer, or I shall play the very fool, and not be fit to show myself at St. James's. One kiss, dear cousin, and adieu ! It would not be wise that I should absent myself from the king's presence just now. For your sake I must not linger ; ” and the fair creature moved away in grace and beauty.

She glided through the hall ; the splendid coach drove off ; the running-footmen, bearing torches, preceded and accompanied her.

“ How unjust, ” thought Lady Nithsdale, “ is the common accusation that pomp and splendour harden the heart ! Where could I find more true kindness and sympathy than in my

dear cousin Christian, whose life has been one sunny dream of unclouded brilliancy?" But as she slowly and thoughtfully returned in solitude to the temporary lodging which Amy had procured for her, she pondered on the duchess's words — "My lord has many enemies, she said: how can he have enemies? Surely, if favour is to be shown to any, to whom could it be more properly extended than to him? Does not the kind duchess alarm herself needlessly? And yet she knows the counsels of those in power. She would not wish to excite unreasonable fears in my mind. Alas! what can she mean? My lord was not one of the first to join the insurgents: Lord Derwentwater was already in arms; Forster was at the head of a considerable body of troops; the Earl of Mar had set up King James's standard. Neither had he, like the Earl of Mar, ever made professions of loyalty to the House of Hanover. General Forster is even now a member of King George's parliament. But my dear lord is not obnoxious from either of these causes. He has never been guilty of treachery, neither has he ever been forward in causing disturbances in his native land; but when civil broils became inevitable, then — then he was not found wanting to the family for which his ancestors have bled and suffered. Oh! would that the morrow were arrived! This long tedious night, which must intervene before I can see, learn, hear, know, do anything further, how wearisome, how irksome is it!"

Upon her return to her lodgings, she found that Amy Evans, on her part, had not been idle. She had already sought and obtained an interview with her former companion Mrs. Morgan.

Nearly ten years had elapsed since Mellicent Hilton had left the Welsh valley of her childhood as the bride of Mr. Morgan, and from that time the playfellows had never met; for before Mrs. Morgan returned to visit her father in his solitude, Amy had accompanied the Countess of Nithsdale into Scotland.

Mrs. Morgan was fortunately alone on the evening in question, when Amy, half-alarmed at her own presumption, presented herself at her door.

She did not at first recollect, in the Mrs. Evans who was announced, the merry Amy of her childhood; neither would Amy have recognised, in the tall, slender, modish lady before her, the buxom, rosy girl who had climbed the mountain paths, and pulled the wild flowers with her. She hesitated for a

moment, while she assured herself that, although the complexion was less brilliant, and the full form had fined into a marvellous taper waist, still the laughing blue eye was the same, the expression of the free hearty smile the same, although the dimples were not so visible in the less rounded cheek.

Mrs. Morgan, with an air of courtly breeding, bent herself gracefully towards the stranger, waiting till she opened her business ; when Amy, half abashed at the changes which had taken place in the exterior of her former friend, half reassured by the kindly countenance which spoke that the heart remained unchanged, after making a low and respectful courtesy, began with some hesitation, "that she could scarcely hope Mrs. Morgan would still bear in mind the childish playmate of Mrs. Mellicent Hilton,—Amy, the daughter of old Rachael Evans, of Poole Castle."

"What, Amy, the Queen of the May ! is it you, my old friend ?" exclaimed Mrs. Morgan, holding out her hand with the frankness she brought from the Montgomeryshire valley, unimpaired by the intercourse she had since had with the world. "Oh ! I have often wished to see you again, and often thought what happy hours we have passed together, when we have laughed even to tears without knowing wherefore, and sung for very want of thought and care. But, my good Amy, your looks speak that, since those days, you have been made acquainted with thought and care. Your countenance is sorrowful. Is your mother, the good Rachael, well ? And David ?—How comes it you are still Amy Evans ? Have you been cruel after all ?"

"Alas, madam ! my poor mother has been dead these two years ; she scarce survived her mistress more than a few weeks : but they were both in years ; and the good Duke of Powis allowed her to be buried in his own family vault, and she lies near her honoured mistress, the duchess. And as to David, my dear Mrs. Mellicent, I have not thought of him for many and many a year ; I should esteem it beneath me to pine for him ! He showed the truth of the old saying, 'out of sight, out of mind ;' and I shall never be the one to prove an old proverb false !" answered Amy, with a flash of her former spirit. "But, madam, I have other cares, and heavier ones, upon my mind. My dear mistress the good Countess of Nithsdale's lord is in prison, with the other lords whom

they call rebels, and my lady and I have rode to London to attend him, and, as I hope, to be of some service to him. But we are nearly strangers in London; and I thought, madam, that for old acquaintance sake, perhaps, you would stand our friend. I knew Mr. Morgan was much about the palace; and they say, madam," she continued, smiling, "there is nothing like a friend at court; and so I made bold to come to you at once. I thought, also, you could perhaps inform us where we might lodge respectably, and yet privately; for her grace the Duchess of Montrose warned my lady not to live in state, but to keep private."

"Alas! good Amy, I fear you are come on a sad errand," answered Mrs. Morgan, with a serious countenance. "I fear that the Earl of Nithsdale is one whose fate is sealed. I hear no talk of mercy being extended towards him. So staunch a Catholic!—so influential a man on the borders of Scotland and England!—so forward as his family have ever been in support of the exiled race! Alas, for your poor mistress! Is she much attached to him?"

"Oh, madam!" exclaimed Amy, with a face of consternation, "it will kill my mistress if anything happens to my lord! I am sure, quite sure, she could not outlive him," she continued, wringing her hands; "you never, madam, saw such love as hers; it is not like anything else that ever I heard of. I am sure, when I see how she hangs upon my lord's words—how she honours and reveres him—how she watches his looks, and lives but for him—I cannot think I ever cared anything at all about David. And you, madam, you were very partial to Mr. Morgan; and I well remember you were resolved to have him" (Mrs. Morgan smiled); "but still your love was not like my poor mistress's!"

"Poor soul!" said Mrs. Morgan; "what can I do for her? I would serve her, or any one in such distress, if I knew how I could do so. More especially, I would gladly serve any one whom you seem to love so dearly."

"I do indeed love my dear lady with my whole heart, and no one who knows her excellence could do otherwise."

"Well, dear Amy, you may count on my exerting what little influence I may possess; and Mr. Morgan is so kind, I am sure he will assist us, if he can. In the mean time, I can tell you of a worthy family with whom your mistress

might be comfortably and respectably lodged. I will see Mrs. Mills to-morrow ; her house is not far removed from the Tower, which would, I think, be a recommendation to the Countess of Nithsdale ; and she is a gentle, kind soul, who will be ready to weep with your lady, and will never wound her by a thoughtless or indiscreet word."

Amy Evans's countenance brightened. "I was right," she exclaimed, "when I told the countess the world might work great changes, but it would be indeed a great one if Mrs. Mellicent Hilton had not still the kindest heart that ever beat. I feared I was making very bold, and was presuming too much upon the freedom permitted in childhood, when I ventured to come to you ; but I thought time could never have hardened such feelings as yours, so as to make you resent the liberty I was taking. In my honoured lady's name, and my own, receive our most grateful thanks, madam ;" and Amy kissed the hand which Mrs. Morgan cordially extended towards her.

"I will see Mrs. Mills to-morrow morning ; and then, with the Countess of Nithsdale's permission, I will wait on her, and inform her what arrangements I have been able to make."

"Our blessings on you, dear madam !" repeated Amy, as she took her leave, and hastened back to meet her lady upon her return from the Duchess of Montrose.

Lady Nithsdale listened with gratitude to all that Amy told her ; and the kindness they had both met with on their several missions proved the best cordial which could be administered to feelings so tried as hers had been. Exhausted nature, however, claimed its rights, and she slept. The bodily fatigue which caused sleep, —

"Tir'd nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep,"

to give a respite to the workings of her mind, may have assisted in enabling her to bear all that awaited her.

CHAPTER XVII.

The less I may be blest with her company, the more I will retire to God, and my own heart, whence no malice can banish her. My enemies may envy, but they can never deprive me of the enjoyment of her virtues, while I enjoy myself. — *Erkon Basiliké.*

As the day began to dawn, and the grey winter light gradually illumed the narrow dirty streets, which the remains of snow rendered more than usually dreary, the Countess of Nithsdale wound her way to the Tower.

It was still too early to gain admittance, or even to be allowed to speak with the porter. The gates were not yet opened : she stood and gazed till her feelings were almost intolerably excited, and then she paced up and down with a quick and hurried step, till, abruptly stopping, she pressed the arm of her faithful companion, Amy, and pointing to the antique building, she cried, in an accent of despair, “ He is there, Amy, he is there, and I cannot be with him ! ”

Amy looked with awe and vague fear at the spot, which, from our cradle, is united in our minds with the ideas of murder, the scaffold, open executions, and secret assassination. She trembled at the certainty that her dear master actually lay within its fearful precincts ; and she turned an eye of commiseration on her lady, to think that she was, in sober truth, an actress in one of those tragedies of which we are apt to hear and read as of fictitious horrors.

They gazed upon the thick and muddy water of the moat, upon the lofty wall which rose on the other side, and in which the inhabitants, of whose dwellings it formed a part, had here and there opened windows, added gabled roofs, and pieced the ancient rough stone-work with brick additions of their own. This patch-work took off from its antiquity and solemnity, without imparting to such a building any air of comfort. On the contrary, it spoke of long residence within the narrow limits of a prison.

At length the clock struck the appointed hour, and she hastened to the gates to solicit an interview with the Lieutenant of the Tower.

After some delay, the request was granted, when she received the answer the Duchess of Montrose had led her to

anticipate. The orders were most strict that none should be allowed to visit the prisoners before the day appointed for pronouncing sentence upon them ; but hopes were held out to her that she might obtain permission to share Lord Nithsdale's confinement.

Had it not been for the duchess's caution, it is more than probable she would gladly have accepted the conditions : for to feel herself so near him, and yet to be withheld from seeing him ; — to know that he was in solitude and sadness, looking only for her company to cheer him, and to refuse to share his prison ; — to turn away when she had it in her power to look upon his face, to hear again that soft, deep, melodious voice, — alas ! it was a sore trial ! But she was firm in adhering to her resolution. Such, however, was her agitation, that as she tottered from the lieutenant's apartments, some of the soldiers, moved with compassion, offered her a seat for a few moments in the guard-room. One kindly brought her a cup of water, for which she did not fail to show her gratitude by deeds as well as words. He accompanied her to the outer gate ; and she succeeded so well in working on his feelings of kindness and of self-interest, that she obtained from him a promise to exert himself in her behalf, and an assurance that when he was on guard, he would not watch too narrowly which way she passed.

With many a lingering look towards the dismal edifice, she tore herself away, but it was not without a hope of compassing by stealth the interview which she had been refused.

She hastened to her appointment with the duchess, when she did not fail to tell her how faithfully she had obeyed her injunctions, how resolutely she had even turned from his prison gates, when her heart burned to rush to her husband ; but at the same time she imparted to her the hopes she entertained of seeing him through the means of the kind-hearted guard.

" If all that is said be true," answered the duchess archly, " it is not so difficult to gain access to the prisoners ; a golden key is often more potent than an iron bar ! Meantime, I would advise your exerting all the influence you may possess with my Lord Townshend and the Duke of Richmond. My husband tells me they are both likely to advocate measures of severity ; and yet I should hope the Duke of Richmond would remember

that the Earl of Derwentwater is his kinsman. The Earls of Danby and of Nottingham I spoke with last night, and I trust with good effect. They both promised they would second any petition from the prisoners. Some will certainly be pardoned ; but, dearest cousin, we must exert ourselves to the utmost, and yet our zeal must be tempered with discretion. The earl your husband has, as I told you, many enemies ; and I should be a false friend did I not confess to you that he is not one of those who are likely to be most leniently dealt with." Lady Nithsdale clasped her hands with such an expression of anguish that the duchess hastened to add, " But I know not, neither can any one know, in truth, what will be the sentence of the court. 'Tis all conjecture."

" But why, O why, should conjecture be unfavourable to my lord ?"

" Nay, I cannot say. It may be—a Catholic,—his property on the very borders of the two countries,—his family so long attached to the Stuarts ;—but all may yet be well. Circumstances may arise in his favour. Should the sentence be—be such as to blast our hopes,—they speak of a petition to be signed by the prisoners."

" My lord will never put his name to anything that may savour of dishonour. I know not what this petition may prove ; but if it is such as should change any sentence that may have passed, I marvel if it can be such as it would become my lord to sign,—or such"—she added emphatically,— " or such as I could wish him to sign : " her voice broke, and she burst into tears at thus, as it were, with her own lips pronouncing his doom. " His life," she continued, as if to justify herself for what she had uttered, " must not be preserved at the price of honour !" and her delicate form reared itself, and her eye glanced upwards, as if to seek from Heaven the strength she so much needed.

The duchess sighed. " What a noble spirit," she thought, " is probably destined to be crushed ! what a generous heart, in all probability, will be condemned to drink the bitter cup of sorrow to the very dregs ! " She cast her dark bright eyes on the ground to conceal her emotion.

Lady Nithsdale saw the tears glistening in her eyelashes : " You weep, cousin ! you are weeping for me ! Alas ! alas ! you know his doom. You know the counsels of those in

power ; and you know that they are his inveterate foes. You fear to tell me that you know it !”

“ On my honour, I know nothing,” repeated the duchess with solemnity ; “ but surely we all suspect and fear enough to draw tears from drier eyes and harder hearts than mine. My dear cousin knows of old, that a little thing will move me to smile, or to weep ; so you must not augur ill from my childish weakness, but set it down to the account of Christian Montrose’s variable temperament :” and she strove to smile through the tears which now flowed every moment faster down her cheeks.

After some farther consultation between the friends they parted, and at dusk Lady Nithsdale again repaired to the Tower. The accommodating guard was in attendance. He quickly and silently admitted her through the wicket. As she passed under the first archway, she fancied she perceived another muffled female figure who glided quietly on, as if accustomed to the way. The sight re-assured her, as it seemed to confirm what the duchess had told her of the potency of a golden key. In silence she crossed the bridge over the moat : she looked fearfully on all sides, dreading lest each form she saw might be that of some guard more strict in the performance of his duty ; and doubting whether in a few moments she might be blessed with the sight of her husband, or whether she might be driven forth despairing to her desolate lodging.

When on the bridge, the masts of the vessels lying in the Thames were visible over the parapet. She could just distinguish them dark against the sky. She cast towards them a lingering look, and thought, “ O that we were together on board the meanest of those vessels ; together, on our way to life and liberty !”

They emerged from the gloom of the second archway, and keeping under the shadow of the southern wall, they passed what seemed to her, a considerable distance between the lofty buildings. “ Those are the warders’ apartments,” whispered the guard, pointing to the high wall to the north : “ ’Tis there that most of the rebels have their lodgings ; go straight on, till you get to the Traitor’s gate, — there, to the right,” — she shuddered as the word was uttered, and looked fearfully as he directed to the portals which are only opened to admit a prisoner, but never to send him forth to freedom ; — “ when

you get there, turn to your left through the Bloody Tower," — a more icy chill ran through her veins ; — " then to your left again, up the steps, and you will see a girl who will lead you where you wish to go. I must not be seen any farther than this spot. I shall be on guard just an hour longer. Be sure you do not linger beyond that time, or you will never make your way out of this dismal place ; and as for me ! I shall pay a heavy price for my good-nature."

" Would I could adequately reward you for your charity !" answered the countess, pouring gold into his hand ; — " but Heaven will not forget this deed of mercy !"

She found the girl upon the steps, as she had been led to expect, and she immediately followed her to a door about the centre of the building to the south of the court, when, bidding her wait for a moment, the girl disappeared. Lady Nithsdale trembled from head to foot : her heart seemed almost to stop its pulsations, so agonising was the fear that now, on the very threshold, something might occur to disappoint her hopes.

Intense as was her anxiety to see her husband, as the moment actually approached, a dread came over her at the notion of seeing him under such circumstances. Her thoughts were painfully broken in upon by the sounds of merriment and revelry which burst from one of the neighbouring windows — loud songs and shouts of laughter ! They jarred upon her ear as something out of tune, unfitting for the place or season, and she wondered how gaolers could be so devoid of feeling as to indulge in noisy jollity, within hearing of their prisoners.

The young girl quickly returned.

" This is the moment, madam. The guards are all engaged ; they are going to convey those prisoner lords, whom you may hear carousing within, back to their several apartments ; and now you can slip up unperceived."

" The axe suspended over their heads," thought Lady Nithsdale, " and this unseemly recklessness ! and shall such as they find mercy, while my lord —— "

In a few seconds she had mounted the narrow stairs ; passed the outer room, which was at that moment vacant ; and the young maiden having gently unbolted the farther door, she found herself in her husband's presence !

He was reading by a dimly burning candle, and started at

the sound of footsteps ; but before he could ascertain the cause of this interruption, his wife was on his bosom, her arms were around his neck.

“ I am here ! I am with you at last ! It is your own Winifred ! ” she exclaimed.

“ Then Heaven has mercy still in store for me ! ” he replied.

For a few moments neither could speak. Words seemed all inadequate to express the strong emotions of joy, and of grief, which struggled in their hearts. The Earl of Nithsdale, whose mind was chastened, whose feelings were tempered by long confinement, was the first to recover his self-possession. “ Now I see you, my love, I am indeed no longer comfortless ! Oh, Winifred ! I have passionately longed for this blessed moment ! It is five long months since we parted, love ; — I have counted the days, the hours ; — there has not been one in which I have not required your gentle strength, your trusting patience, to support me or to soothe me. Thanks be to Heaven that has vouchsafed to me once more the joy of beholding you ! ” — and he lifted her gently from his shoulder, on which her head had sunk. — “ And now let me look upon that dear face, and from those pure and holy eyes draw faith, submission, and resignation.” He gazed upon her for some moments with a tenderness, which, as he gazed, increased in intensity. “ Alas ! ” he suddenly exclaimed, and flinging his arms upon the table, he hid his face in his hands — “ Alas ! it is not thus I shall learn to submit cheerfully to my fate ! To see you once again ! — to hear that voice — to press that beloved form once more to my heart — to feel that if my life were spared, it would be to pass that life with you, for you ! oh ! this does not reconcile one to what must be — ” Then checking himself, he added, in a calmer tone, “ But are you well, my love ? you have not suffered on your journey ? And the children ? — you hear of them ? I know not how it has fared with them for many, many weeks. Poor innocents ! ” — And the thought that he should never see them more, made his voice quiver as he spoke.

“ Oh, they are well, and safe, and happy, in health and freedom, in a more favoured land than this ! ”

He looked up, and a smile illumined his features ; but by the dim light of the solitary taper his countenance looked wan,

and the last few months had left deep traces of care upon his brow."

"You are ill!" she exclaimed in affright; "you must be ill."

"Nay," he replied, with gentleness, "my health is unimpaired; and now my Winifred is come, my spirits will soon be cheered."

"Alas! I have seen you pale before, and I have seen you sad; but never, never did I see you look thus!"

"Time will do its own work, dearest! and I am older by some months than when you saw me last. My Winifred must not quarrel with her husband," he added, smiling, "because age steals upon him with no gentle hand. Oh! is it not our wish, our most earnest wish, my love," he continued, with solemnity and tenderness, "to see each other grow old? And do you not think that if we should be spared to each other, years would only rivet still closer the bonds which unite us; that for every charm which may depart with youth, there would arise a thousand recollections of mutual kindnesses, mutual sufferings, ay, and mutual joys, (for we have known many days of happiness,) which would still render us more dear, one to the other? Methinks that when that delicate form shall have lost its roundness," and he passed his arm around her slender waist; "and when those eyes shall have lost their brilliancy, and that clear forehead its smoothness; when these soft curls," and he pressed to his lips one of the two or three long curls which, according to the fashion of the time, were suffered to fall on her neck, — "when these soft brown curls shall be mixed with grey — that my Winifred would be, if possible, more precious to my heart than she is even now; for I should remember that those eyes have been dimmed with tears for me, that smooth brow care-worn on my account." Lady Nithsdale wept softly, unresistingly; she struggled not against her tears, for she was almost unconscious that they flowed. "Should those blessed days ever come to us, Winifred, the recollection of this hour will be sweet; and should there be no future for me —"

"There will be none for me," she quickly interposed; "I feel assured," and she pressed her hand against her heart — "I feel assured, there would be none for me!"

"Hush, hush, dearest! — remember the children; they

must not be orphans : — but we will not unnerve ourselves. I have still much to hear : as yet I have thought but of myself, — I blush that private feeling should so wholly have engrossed me. Did you see the king ? for thus I must still call him, though I well see that he is fated never to rule over this land. And I begin to think that it might not be for the general weal that he should do so. The sight, the actual sight of civil war, makes one view matters in a different light.”

“ Yes, my dearest lord, I waited on his majesty at Scone ; for I imagined you would have wished me so to do.”

“ Assuredly, assuredly ! ”

“ Though many whom we believed to be his most faithful adherents heeded not the summons to attend him, I thought that my dear lord would be the more anxious I should not be backward in my service.”

“ My Winifred judged of my feelings as she is ever wont. And did the king receive you graciously ? ”

“ Yes, graciously ; they told me most graciously : but I know not how it was ; he seemed ill at ease, suffering in body and in mind. He said as much, I suppose, as is usual and fitting ; and yet, methought, under the circumstances, there lacked something of that warmth which might have relighted the expiring flame of loyalty in one’s bosom.”

“ The expiring flame of loyalty in your bosom, my Winifred ? If I had spoken so, having seen all I have seen ! ”

“ Oh ! but I have seen enough ! I passed through the blackened ruins of the burned villages, — burned by his own orders. I saw the houseless inhabitants of what once were flourishing and happy homes ; I saw the helpless children perishing in the snow, the old and the infirm without a shelter ; I saw the desolated fields ; and I had heard — oh ! I had heard how the noblest of the land had been treated on their approach to this city, and I felt that it was for his sake that my husband had been pinioned, that his hands had been tied with cords ; for his sake that he had been exposed to the gibes of the multitude ! And there he stood, cold and unmoved, and ‘ hoped my good lord’s health continued unimpaired ! ’ Oh ! at that moment my loyalty died within me ! and I felt — oh ! how agonizingly did I feel — that we had sacrificed all for one who was little worthy of the sacrifice ! ”

“ Alas ! I have, as you know, long feared that such was

the case. His spirit has been early crushed, and it does not possess the elasticity to spring up again. They still retain Perth. Do they expect to hold it?"

"The proclamation orders that a public thanksgiving for King James's safe arrival should take place on the 26th; but there were vague rumours that the Earl of Mar had resolved to evacuate the town; still these were only rumours."

"A thanksgiving for his safe arrival!" Lord Nithsdale repeated with a faint sad smile; "one for his safe departure would be more to the purpose, I fear. Did you see the king but once?"

"It was on my return from Scone I received the good duchess's letter, and you may well imagine I did not linger on the way."

"Some one told me the roads were impassable from the snow; that all carriages were stopped, and that even the post was delayed; so I did not look for you to cheer me yet."

"I rode from York," she replied, "with Walter Elliot and our faithful Amy Evans."

"You, Winifred, who never could be persuaded to mount the gentlest and best-paced palfrey!"

"Oh! I forgot those foolish fears, those fears which were bred of too much happiness, and of being too tenderly cared for; I never thought of any fear but one — that of being delayed on my journey."

"My own love! that soul of thine will ever have the mastery over that fragile form."

"Hark! The clock strikes. I have but a few moments more. The hour is wearing away. I have seen the duchess, and she has told me to whom I must most strenuously apply; and she has warned me that I must not do what, as you may well believe, my heart would prompt, — share your prison. I must be at liberty to act in your service: but I have bribed a kindly guard, and he will admit me when it is possible. I understand others, without the holy claim I have, gain access to some within the walls: so trust me, I shall soon be here again; and, as I hope, with news to cheer us both." Lord Nithsdale shook his head slightly, but then, with an assumed cheerfulness, listened to what she had to communicate. "Lord Danby and Lord Nottingham are friendly; the Duke of Richmond, though not friendly, cannot be forward in the prose-

cution, related as he is to Lord Derwentwater ; and I feel persuaded the next news from Scotland will be such as to quiet the fears of government."

" And is the time come when one calculates upon the failure of the cause to which oneself and all one's house have ever been devoted ? "

" Nay ! can I now think of any cause but my own dear lord's ? such days are past, and gone for ever ! To accomplish all that may be compassed with honour is now my first, my only object ! " and she tore herself from the husband who, whatever might be her devotion to him, repaid her with the love and reverence he might feel for a guardian angel.

She was gone ! He remained in his solitude, gazing upon the door through which she had disappeared, and almost doubting whether he had been blessed with her actual presence, or whether it had not been a cheering vision vouchsafed to him in mercy.

How often had he thought that were she near to console and to support him, he could meet his fate without a murmur. He fancied that the bitterest part of his present condition was the entire separation from her who was the partner of all his feelings, the depositary of his sorrows, the sharer of his anxieties. But alas ! while life was so dreary, so joyless, so irksome, it was far less precious to him than when the sight of her had brought before him all he was to lose. He was sad, hopeless, resigned before. He felt that, if wrong, he had not been wilfully so in the course he had pursued ; he consoled himself with the reflection that no stain could rest on his fair fame ; that, though his name might be attainted, he left behind him to his children a character of unblemished honour. He had deliberately, and with little hope of any better result than the present, upheld the pretensions of the prince for whom he was now suffering ; and he felt it would not become him to repine at an event to which he had always looked forward as probable.

An honourable death in battle, a more awful one on the scaffold, or at best an eternal banishment, were the alternatives which he had ever contemplated ; and he thought he had schooled his mind to acquiesce calmly in the fulfilment of that which awaited him, although it might be the least welcome of the three.

Once more to see his beloved wife, to pour forth all his thoughts and feelings into her bosom, to deliver to her his last injunctions concerning his children, to arrange with her some plan for her future life, to give and to receive the last adieux, and then placidly and composedly to lay his head upon the block,—such had been the course in which he had guided his feelings and his reflections.

He had seen her ! He had felt how dearly he was loved ! He had felt what charms life still possessed for him ! He had also felt how utterly impossible it was that she could ever acquiesce as he did in his fate, how completely her happiness was bound up in his ! And where were now the resignation, — the cheerful submission, — the philosophical indifference with which he had brought himself to anticipate his probable sentence ?

Never since the first night he had become an inmate of the Tower, had he experienced such a struggle of conflicting feelings ! The picture which he had himself drawn of the gradual approach of age, of the happiness of descending hand in hand into the vale of years, had awakened a desire of life which he had hoped no longer lurked within his bosom, and it required the aid of prayer to subdue, and all the pride of man to conceal, the agitation of his mind.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It is God's indulgence which gives me the space, but man's cruelty that gives me the sad occasion for these thoughts. — *Eikon Basilike*.

THE greater part of the night which succeeded the Earl of Nithsdale's interview with his wife, was spent by him in restlessly measuring with hasty strides the mean apartment to which he was confined.

In the morning he obtained permission to refresh himself by walking on the leads over the warders' lodgings, an indulgence occasionally granted to the prisoners.

The fresher air, all chilly as it was, and loaded with London smoke, revived him ; and as he paced the narrow limits, his eye turned involuntarily towards the vessels which crowded

the river up to London Bridge. As he watched, he saw one who sesails were beginning to be unfurled, while all was bustle, hurry, and confusion on board : she was getting under weigh, and he sighed to think how impossible to be surmounted were the obstacles which interposed between him and the vessel which seemed so near.

His eye dropped, and rested on the Traitor's Gate, and he almost thought he once more heard the jarring sound of the iron bolts and bars which had closed behind him.

As his eye passed on, it was arrested by the Bloody Tower, which, as some say, was the spot in which the tragic murder of the young princes was enacted. "They knew not the pains of life," he thought, "neither knew they its joys ! They knew not that mutual affection which so painfully yet so sweetly attaches one to existence ! But there," and he looked upon the stone which marks the place where Lord Guildford Dudley and Lady Jane Grey were executed, — "there did two pure creatures, bound to each other by every holy tie of faith and love, yield up their innocent spirits. They who had scarcely tasted of happiness, — the cup was snatched from their lips ere they could fully know its sweetness ! They would have esteemed themselves most blessed, could they have been assured of as many years of mutual affection, of wedded bliss, as I have already enjoyed. Alas for ye, innocent victims of the ambition of others ! when I remember you, I must not repine ! And there, again !" as his thoughts followed the objects on which his eye dwelt, — "that was the prison of the unfortunate Anne Boleyn, — wounded in her affections, in her honour, — pampered with flattery, surrounded with pomp, enervated by splendour, only to be the more cruelly and suddenly plunged into the depths of misery and disgrace. No ! no ! I must not repine !" — and he again schooled his mind to resignation and submission. I have neither met with falsehood nor with ingratitude ! my honour is not impeached ! I must not, will not, repine !"

Lady Nithsdale meanwhile was not inactive. She visited the Countesses of Derwentwater and Wintoun ; and they agreed that, should the sentence not prove favourable, they would together present a petition to parliament, and in the intervening space of time that each should exert her private influence with those in power, to win as many as possible to their interest.

She visited her husband's cousin, the Duchess of Buccleugh, and obtained the duke's promise to present a petition should the necessity occur; and having taken every measure that prudence could dictate, she had but to await in tremulous anxiety the sentence which was to be pronounced on the 9th of February.

She frequently contrived to see her lord, though she was always obliged to do so by stealth. These visits, although so ardently desired by both, were to both hours of bitter anguish.

The Earl of Nithsdale, fully aware of the feeling which prevailed against him, anticipated but too justly the sentence which would be pronounced, and could not bring himself to echo the hopeful sentiments with which his wife buoyed up her spirits; neither had he the heart fully to express to her his own more gloomy apprehensions.

He listened to the details of all she had done, and all she projected, with a gentle, hopeless gratitude, which saddened and dispirited her; although she could not, she would not, adopt his view of the subject.

This produced a certain reserve. She felt he restrained his own feelings for her sake, that he smothered the anticipations of which she could not endure to hear the utterance; and the open communion of thought was at an end! She dared not allude to the future, his countenance so plainly expressed there was no future for him; and they both shrunk from a recurrence to the joys of that dear home which neither hoped again to inhabit.

To a third person it would often have appeared strange that, under such circumstances, a wedded pair, so devotedly attached, should be able to dwell at such length upon the public affairs of the day, and to discuss with so much interest the movements in Scotland.

But the earl could not be indifferent as to what befel the prince to whom he had sacrificed himself; while Lady Nithsdale, on the contrary, since her interview with the Chevalier, in which her feelings had been so little gratified, had looked on him as the unworthy object for which her happiness had been wrecked. As her sorrows pressed more heavily upon her, she felt more and more that he had seemed careless of the sufferings of others. As her fears increased, and as her hopes diminished, she more and more resented the cold inquiry

after "the health of the earl her husband;" and the behaviour, which at the time had only seemed measured and unsatisfactory, assumed, as she dwelt upon it, the character of selfish hardness.

Alas! the keen edge of sensibility must have been blunted long ere this in the heart of the unfortunate Chevalier de St. George! Inured to misfortune, he appears to have been stupified by it. With the resolution already taken to evacuate Perth, three days after that appointed for the general thanksgiving, did the infatuated prince carry on the pageant of royalty.

The address then offered up—"O Lord, who hast preserved and brought back our dread sovereign King James safely into his own dominions, to the comfort of all those who, in obedience to thy holy word, 'fear God and honour the king'"—could to none present have appeared a more sickening mockery than to the dispirited, despairing descendant of a hundred kings.

Surrounded by a scanty train of heart-broken attendants, in the midst of those very counsellors who had declared the absolute necessity of abandoning the only town of importance which they yet held,—the very spot where they were assembled in prayer and thanksgiving,—did he listen to the words, "Bow the hearts of all his subjects as one man, so that they may only contend who shall be the first to bring the king to his own house."

When, upon the approach of the Duke of Argyle, a vague rumour arose, that it was purposed to retire before the enemy without striking a blow, the indignation of the Highlanders knew no bounds. The love of fighting, inherent in that hardy race, had caused them to look forward with joy and alacrity to the desperate conflict which they imagined to be approaching.

But when they found that the unwelcome report was only too true grief and disappointment turned all to rage, and they assailed their officers as they passed in the streets with every species of reproach.

"What can we do?" was the answer of one who was supposed to be intimately acquainted with the counsels of the Earl of Mar.

"Do!" replied the Highlander. "Let us do that for

which we were called in arms, which certainly was not to run away."

Nor was the retreat carried into effect without meeting with strenuous and vehement opposition, even in the council of the Chevalier; although, after much violence of discussion, at length it was agreed by the majority, that to attempt the defence of Perth would be an act of desperate chivalry.

To appease the feelings of those who appeared most irritated, it was given out that a halt was to take place at Aberdeen, where supplies of foreign troops were expected.

It was on the 30th of January, the anniversary of his grandfather's martyrdom, that the Chevalier's Highland army filed off upon the ice, which, as the Earl of Mar had anticipated, rendered the Tay, if of no avail as a protection, no impediment to the movement which he even then projected.

The town was immediately occupied by a body of the Duke of Argyle's dragoons. The Chevalier arrived at the sea-port town of Montrose, from whence it was his intention to make his escape by sea. To mask his design of thus relinquishing his ill-concerted attempt, and abandoning the faithful few who still adhered to him, his equipage and horses were brought out before the gate of his lodgings, and his guards were mounted as if to proceed on the journey to Aberdeen.

But before the hour appointed for the march, James had secretly gained the shore, and, accompanied by the Earl of Mar, had safely reached a small vessel which had been prepared for their reception. Thus did he for the second time abandon the shores of that land over which so many of his ancestors had reigned, and in which so many of them had given proofs of personal prowess and manly courage. As some of his cotemporaries have observed, the only purpose accomplished by this expedition seems to have been that of bringing off in safety his general, the Earl of Mar.

On General Gordon devolved the unwelcome and difficult task of leading to Aberdeen the remains of the Highland army, who were only restrained from acts of insubordination by knowing that the Duke of Argyle's forces hung upon their rear. At Aberdeen a sealed letter, which had been entrusted to General Gordon, was opened according to the Chevalier's instructions. In this, after expressing his thanks for the

faithful services of his adherents, he gave them full permission to treat with the enemy, or to disperse to their several homes, as might best suit the exigency of the moment.

Thus ended the rebellion, which proved so fatal to many of the noblest houses both of England and Scotland ! And the Countess of Nithsdale felt almost relieved when each day brought intelligence of the hopeless condition of the insurgents ; for she judged, not unwisely, that the less cause there remained to fear them, the less need would there exist of intimidating them by measures of severity.

The 9th of February, on which day the lords were to receive their sentence in Westminster Hall, was fast approaching. On the 8th, Lady Nithsdale passed some hours with her husband. The hopes to which she had so long and so pertinaciously clung had gradually given way before the cold and constrained demeanour with which all her inquiries and intercessions had been met. Evasive answers, professions of inability to be of service to her under the present circumstances, declarations that they must not flatter her, were all the satisfaction she could procure from those who might be supposed to know the probable decision of the court.

The earl, always hopeless, looked upon the worn and anxious countenance of his wife, till every feeling for himself was lost in commiseration for her wretchedness : “ It will be better for you, my love, when it is all over.”

“ What mean you ? ” she replied quickly, wilfully misapprehending his meaning, which it would have been too painful to comprehend, and vaguely trusting that he would not dare to explain his thoughts more clearly.

“ I only mean, this state of suspense, dearest Winifred, has almost worn you out. I shall be glad when the morrow is past, for any certainty is preferable to suspense ; though,” he added in a lower tone, “ I cannot say it is suspense that I feel.”

“ Spare me, spare me ! ” she said ; “ to-morrow is soon enough ! But there is hope ! — There must be hope ! Man is not a wild beast that he should find pleasure in destruction ! When self-preservation no longer impels to cruelty, human sympathies will again influence the heart. James’s hasty retreat must set their fears at rest. I must — I will hope ! ”

“ Against all reason, dearest ! ” he added, with a smile,

taking her cold passive hand in his. "My Winifred's firm and well-ordered mind has always hitherto been the stay and the support of mine: it has been from her gentle lips that I have learned true piety and real submission; from her that I have learned, or tried to learn, to bend my will to the decrees of Providence! Her support will not now, in my utmost need, be withdrawn from me! she will not make my task more hard! neither will she say or do aught that shall unsettle my mind, or render me unfit for what is to be done to-morrow. She would not have her husband appear in Westminster Hall before his assembled peers, before the court, and before the people of England, with excited feelings and nerves unstrung! And trust me, when I gaze on you, it is no easy task to face death with composure, and to brace my mind to hear unmoved the sentence which awaits me to-morrow. The love of life, of life with you, is only too strong within this bosom. Speak not to me of hope! I must not admit the notion; but speak to me of that heaven where we may be re-united! Tell me that by unrepining submission I may best make myself worthy of once more meeting you, my love; tell me that life is short, and that we have already enjoyed many years of happiness; that we have already mounted the hill, that we must soon descend it; that probably we have known the best years of our existence; that before us may be a future of sickness, sorrow, suffering,—the death of friends! the loss of children!" He paused; then overcome with pity, he added, in a broken voice, "Alas, alas! and shall your gentleness be left to meet these sorrows alone? to buffet with fortune alone? Oh, my poor, poor Winifred! pardon me for having indulged in such sad anticipations; pardon me for having pictured sorrows which can only be alleviated by being shared! for sickness would not to me be suffering if tended by you! grief would lose half its sting if you were near to whisper consolation; and who but the beloved of one's heart can administer comfort under the other deprivations to which I so cruelly alluded? Alas for you, my poor, poor Winifred!"

And the composure which he had so striven to preserve completely gave way when he thus painted to himself the desolation of her whom he should leave behind. He pressed the hand he still held to his lips; and the tears which he could no longer restrain, fell fast upon it.

“ Hush, hush ! not another word,” she said ; “ I will speak neither words of hope nor fear ! my own noble lord shall bear himself in the sight of his fellows as it is fitting he should. No weakness of mine shall enervate that manly mind ; though my heart-strings crack, I will be composed and firm. And now we will part for the night ; we will each to our orisons : prayer and solitude will best strengthen us for the morrow. Should your anticipations prove only too correct, there is yet much to be done, and I will seek confidence and calmness from that Heaven who will, I trust, take thee this night, and ever, into its holy keeping ! ”

“ Amen to thy good wishes, love ! ”

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

WINIFRED, COUNTESS OF NITHSDALE.

(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XIX.

The heroine assumed the woman's place,
Confirm'd her mind, and fortified her face.

Dryden.

WHEN Lady Nithsdale arrived at her lodgings, she there found Mrs. Morgan, who from the moment she first, through Amy Evans's means, became acquainted with her, had proved herself a kind friend, and a strenuous and efficient agent.

As the countess entered the apartment, the haggard expression of her countenance struck the little party of friends who had been awaiting her return. Amy hastened to support her lady, whose steps appeared to totter as she advanced. "Thanks, dear Amy; but I need not your assistance," she replied, with a forced composure: "I am not ill, my good girl; I do not need these attentions; I am well and strong. You do not know how strong I am!"

"Would not your ladyship be better near the fire?" inquired Mrs. Mills, rising from her chair; "the evening is chilly."

"Disturb not yourself, my good friend; I am well here;" replied Lady Nithsdale, sinking into a seat.

"How fares it with my lord, madam? — Is he of good cheer?"

"Well, Amy, right well; he is well in health, and will bear himself gallantly to-morrow, as the grandson of the brave defender of Caerlaverock castle should bear himself," an-

swered the countess, with a forced air of resolution ; for she had employed Mrs. Morgan to procure for her a seat in some obscure part of Westminster Hall, from whence she might be a witness of the trial ; and she feared, if she now betrayed any weakness or emotion, even the yielding Mrs. Morgan might not comply with her wishes.

“ And now I must ask my dear Mrs. Morgan, whether her friend the Earl of Dorset has been as good as his word ;— may we hope for seats in the Hall to-morrow ? ” she inquired, in a tone which she meant should be steady.

“ Yes, dearest Lady Nithsdale ; he says that if you really are resolved upon being present, he can accommodate us ; for you must allow me to accompany you, and also our faithful Mrs. Evans ; I could not allow you to stir without her.”

“ My dear Amy ! no ; I am too well assured of her affection not to be always the better if she is near.” Lady Nithsdale’s eyes were for a moment suffused, for it often happens that a slight emotion draws tears which are frozen in their cells by stronger and deeper ones. “ The spot is a retired one, I trust ; not within sight of the prisoners : I would not that my lord should guess or suspect that I was present ! ”—she clasped her hands,— “ it might unman him ; his voice might falter ; his lips might quiver ; and the world might fancy it could be through fear ! Oh ! he must not, must not see me ! ” she repeated with earnestness.

“ I thought of that,” replied the considerate Mrs. Morgan, “ and the seats provided are near the door—a back entrance—through which you may easily withdraw whenever you may see fit. But still I doubt whether I am a true friend in assisting you in this business. I fear it is rather yielding weakness, than true kindness, as my poor father used to say.—The scene will be too much for you.”

“ Did not Lady Russell act as her lord’s secretary during his trial ? Woman’s affection in her overcame woman’s weakness. She wavered not, she trembled not, at the time ;— though afterwards she wept herself blind !— And was her husband more worthy of a wife’s devotion than is mine ? Did she, could she, love him with more passionate fervour than I do my own dear, dear, noble lord ?—Oh no ! for she had loved before ; he was not the first and only object of the concentrated affection of a whole life ! She had been bound by

previous ties ! She had known joys and sorrows unconnected with him ; but I — my existence was a blank till it was wound up in his ! Depend upon it, dear Mrs. Morgan, what woman's love has done, what woman's love can do, the love that warms this bosom can accomplish ! You need not doubt me. I will not expose myself, nor you, to observation or remark."

The colour had returned into her pale checks, her eye gleamed with a holy brilliancy, her brow assumed an air of lofty resolution, and all present felt assured that, however strong might be her feelings of tenderness, she possessed the courage which could subdue them to her will.

The next day she found herself, as had been previously arranged, in the seats prepared by the Earl of Dorset, who himself conducted them through the crowd. The Earl of Pembroke also, who was nearly related to the Powis family, was not wanting in every kindness and attention.

The Countess of Nithsdale's deportment was perfectly collected. The dress of the day, which allowed much of the form to be concealed by a black silk mantle, and the face to be buried in the hood, enabled her to escape all observation.

A considerable time elapsed before those of whom the court was composed were seated in their due order, and that the prisoners were summoned. She had time to look round with awe upon the innumerable heads with which the floor of the Hall seemed, as it were, to be paved.

At one o'clock, the gates at the end of the vast and antique building were thrown open, and the lords entered walking two and two. Then followed the Garter King at arms, and other officers of the crown, in their robes of state. Then the masters in chancery. The Lord Chancellor Cowper, Lord High Steward on the occasion, walked alone, his train being borne by his attendants to the wool-pack, on which he seated himself.

The peers then uncovered themselves ; and they, as well as all others present, stood uncovered during the time occupied by the reading of the commission.

All listened in breathless silence. The moment was awful in itself ; but the accompaniments of solemnity and state rendered it, if possible, more so.

When the commission was gone through, the serjeant-at-arms cried with a loud voice, " God save the king ! "

These words excited an undefinable sensation in the bosom of Lady Nithsdale. She felt in good sooth that he, in whom resided the power to call together and to control the imposing assemblage before her, was monarch of the realm. She felt that he, for whose sake they were placed in their present desperate situation, had proved himself little worthy of their devotion ;—yet the words grated harshly on her ear,—her heart still refused to acknowledge them.

The herald, and gentleman usher of the black rod, after making three reverences, kneeling, presented the white staff to his grace, who, attended by the herald, black rod, and the seal-bearer, made his proper reverences to the throne, and removed from the wool-pack to an arm-chair which was placed on the uppermost step but one of the throne, when, seating himself, he delivered the staff to the gentleman usher of the black rod, who stood on his right hand, while the seal-bearer held the purse, standing on the left.

After a proclamation enjoining silence under pain of imprisonment, the serjeant-at-arms proceeded : “ Oyez ! Oyez ! Oyez ! Lieutenant of the Tower of London, bring forth your prisoners to the bar, according to the order of the House of Lords to you directed.”

Each of these words fell, as it were, actually, palpably, knocking upon Lady Nithsdale’s heart. For a moment she wondered how she could have willingly placed herself in her present situation ; but she remembered the strong motives she had to try her powers of self-command, and she also remembered her promise to Mrs. Morgan, and she subdued the rising tumult of her soul.

Her companions, also breathless with anxiety, stole a fearful glance towards her as the prisoners were brought to the bar by the deputy governor of the Tower. When the axe, which was brought before them by the gentleman jailer, first made its appearance, they saw Lady Nithsdale for a moment close her eyes, as if unable to endure the sight ; but she recovered herself, and when her lord himself made his appearance, her looks were so intently fixed upon him, that it may be questioned whether her powers of vision took in any other object.

The prisoners, when they approached the bar (after kneeling), bowed to his grace the Lord High Steward, and to the

House of Peers, which compliment was returned to them both by his grace and by the House of Peers.

The Lord High Steward then ordered the articles of impeachment to be read ; after which, he asked them severally what they had to say for themselves why judgment should not pass upon them according to law ?

Lord Derwentwater spoke at some length ; and after him the Earl of Nithsdale, and the Viscount Kenmure. They all pleaded guilty ; but expressed their hope that the assurances of clemency held out to them at Preston would not prove fallacious.

Lord Nithsdale concluded with professing, what his wife well knew he spoke in sincerity and truth, that if mercy were extended towards him, “ he should, during the remainder of his life, pay the utmost duty and gratitude to his most gracious majesty, and the highest veneration and respect to their lordships and the honourable House of Commons.”

The Lord High Steward, who did not hear distinctly, inquired whether the Earl of Nithsdale had pleaded anything in arrest of judgment ; to which the earl replied in a clear sonorous voice, whose mellow tones seemed to thrill through the whole assembly, “ No, my lords, I have not !”

The Lord High Steward then stood up. Every breathing was hushed ! Such stillness reigned throughout the dense mass of living creatures congregated within the spacious hall, that each rain-drop might be heard as it pattered against the windows. But there came a singing, rushing sound in Lady Nithsdale’s ears : at first she could scarcely distinguish the awful words which were slowly, clearly, solemnly pronounced.

“ The sentence of the law must be the same as is usually given against the meanest offenders in the like kind. The most ignominious and painful parts are usually omitted by the grace of the crown to persons of your quality ; but the law in this case, being deaf to all distinctions of persons, requires I should pronounce, and accordingly it is adjudged by this court, that you James Earl of Derwentwater,” — the Lord High Steward paused between each name, — “ William Lord Widdrington,” — her husband’s had not yet been pronounced ; the countess leaned breathlessly forward, — “ William Earl of Nithsdale,” — she covered her face with her hands, but she spoke not ; she did not sob, she did not faint ; her companions

would have led her out, but she motioned them to be still. The Lord High Steward meanwhile continued in the same clear and unmoved voice, — “Richard Earl of Carnwarth, William Viscount Kenmure, and William Lord Nairne, and every of you, return to the prison of the Tower, from whence you came ; from thence you must be drawn to the place of execution : when you come there you must be hanged by the neck, but not till you be dead, for you must be cut down alive ; then your bowels must be taken out, and burnt before your faces.” They looked again upon the unfortunate countess ; but she had fainted with her back supported against the wall, and she had not, it is hoped, heard the last few words. They feared to excite attention, and they sustained her in the position in which she sat, till in the general movement of the court breaking up, they might be able to remove her quietly from the dreadful scene. Still the same stern and brazen voice proceeded : —

“Then your heads must be severed from your bodies, divided each into four quarters, and these must be at the king’s disposal. And God Almighty be merciful to your souls !”

The sergeant-at-arms then repeated : “Oyez ! Our sovereign lord the king strictly charges and commands all manner of persons to keep silence upon pain of imprisonment.” After which the Lord High Steward stood up uncovered, and declaring there was nothing more to be done by virtue of the present commission, broke the staff, and pronounced it dissolved.

For some moments after the whole was concluded, the silence which had been so strictly but so needlessly enjoined continued unbroken. The prisoners, the peers, and all the court, then retired in order as they entered, and an universal buzz of voices and general movement took place.

There were sounds of sorrow ; feelings long repressed found vent ; and in the confusion, Mrs. Morgan and Amy Evans removed Lady Nithsdale into the freer air. She gradually revived, but at first she looked wildly around.

“Alas !” said Mrs. Morgan, “I have been to blame in yielding to your wishes. How could I permit you to expose yourself to such a scene ? and all the while I felt assured that you miscalculated your own strength. Oh ! it was too dreadful !”

“Hush !” answered the countess ; “I know all—you need

not tell me ; I heard enough ; I knew it, I expected it. And now I must remember all I had previously resolved upon."

At this moment the Lords Pembroke and Dorset approached, with countenances expressive of deep commiseration. She pressed both their hands in silence. They conducted her down the steps to the coach which awaited her. Before she entered it, she turned to them : —

" You have each promised me your good offices in case of need. That hour of need is fast approaching ; you will not forget your promises ! "

They bowed assent upon her hand ; and having respectfully, nay almost reverently, placed her in the carriage, they turned hastily away to conceal the emotion which overpowered them.

CHAPTER XX.

Certainly virtue is like precious odours, most fragrant when they are incensed, or crushed ; for prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue. — *Lord Bacon's Essays.*

MRS. MORGAN and Amy Evans expected that the control which the unfortunate Countess of Nithsdale had as yet exercised over her feelings would have completely given way when no longer exposed to the gaze of indifferent persons : they prepared themselves for tears and fainting ; and were surprised when Lady Nithsdale, although silent, remained firm and collected.

Reared in a foreign convent, from which she had only been removed to a retired Welsh castle, and from thence to a life of domestic privacy in Scotland, or, if she occasionally mingled in the busy world, accustomed to look up to her lord for advice, to hang upon him for support, to rely on his judgment for the guidance of her own, it seems wonderful that under such trying circumstances as those in which she was placed, she should have possessed the worldly wisdom, the courage, the discretion, and the decision, to act for herself and for her husband, and to proceed, without wavering or irresolution, to take every measure that prudence could dictate.

When they reached Lady Nithsdale's lodgings, the kind-hearted Mrs. Morgan took her leave, after having given Amy

and Mrs. Mills a thousand directions and injunctions as to the tenderness with which the countess should be treated, the possets which she hoped might compose her to sleep, and the julap which should be placed by her bed-side.

Lady Nithsdale listened to all her good-natured counsels with a placidity which astonished and almost alarmed Amy Evans, although to Mrs. Morgan it appeared but the effect of exhaustion, and, as she trusted, only augured that she might be restored by some calm and refreshing sleep.

Amy, who better knew her mistress, and knew that with increased danger and distress her strength and courage proportionably rose, was not surprised when, upon Mrs. Morgan's departure, and Mrs. Mills's leaving them to prepare the posset so earnestly recommended, Lady Nithsdale laid her hand upon her arm.

"Now, Amy, your true affection, in which I have the utmost confidence,—I rely on it almost as on my own to my lord,—now it is going to be put to the test. He must not die! and we must save him! you and I, Amy, must save him! You start, and look as though you feared that all I have heard and seen this day" (she pressed her hand over her eyes) "had turned my brain, but it is not so; for many weeks I have considered the plan, which is now almost matured within my head. Prisoners have made their escape from places as strong and as well guarded, before now! If others have succeeded in rescuing those most dear to them, why should not we succeed? Promise me, my good and faithful Amy, that you will assist me to the utmost of your power; and, above all, promise that you will offer no argument to dissuade me from my purpose. I tell you beforehand it will be of no avail: should you refuse to serve me, it will only drive me to confide in others who will not deserve my confidence so well."

"Oh, madam! do you doubt me? and do you think Amy Evans would leave undone what others could be found to do? I started, for I remembered those high walls, that broad deep moat, those guards who pace about each avenue to the Tower, and I thought what could we hope to effect? But, madam, command me, and I will diligently execute your behests, and scrupulously keep your counsel."

"Thanks, dear Amy; I was fully assured you would prove

true, and I know not why I spoke for a moment as if I could doubt your devotion. Forgive me ! but the necessity is so absolute that all who meddle in this undertaking should be able to answer for themselves under all circumstances, that I would not have you enter into it thoughtlessly, or unadvisedly. Even myself, to-day, I thought I could have heard unmoved, or at least without betraying emotion, the horrible, horrible words that were uttered ; but I misjudged my own strength, my woman's nerves failed ! And yet I bore a great deal, Amy, and wavered not. I saw the axe, the glittering axe ; and I saw my lord, and I heard his voice ; and I heard part of that sentence ! I bore much without betraying myself ; and, at last, I was only stunned, confused, for a time. Yes, I think I may rely on my own fortitude ; and you, Amy, you never for a moment lost your self-command,—and you have always had a ready wit ; oh, we shall succeed, I am sure we shall !”

“ Heaven grant we may, my honoured lady ! If zeal and perseverance can effect my lord's preservation, we shall succeed.”

“ Then listen :— You must purchase at various shops, and on various occasions, not to excite suspicion, all that is necessary for female dress, and we must make it up, complete, the size to fit my lord. I have one in my thoughts whom he may personate : she is very tall ; and though slender, her present condition makes her appear more stout than usual, when wrapt in a loose cloak. She suspects not my design,—nor must she ;—for she is timid, and might betray all by her fears. She must not know till too far engaged to retreat. — And now, Amy, send Walter Elliot to the Tower to inquire of the lieutenant at what hour to-morrow the Countess of Nithsdale may be admitted to visit her lord. I am informed that, after the sentence, we are to be allowed to see the prisoners freely ; and it will be best we should do this openly. Alas ! the hardest task of all will be to work on my lord to consent.”

“ And, madam, think you I also shall be admitted to see my lord ?”

“ Assuredly, I hope so ; I trust we shall procure admission for many of his friends : it is upon that understanding I build my hopes. I have been informed that when sentence is once

passed, such has usually been the custom. And now away ; let us be stirring. I would there were something to be done every hour in the day. It is in solitude and inaction that my sorrows press upon me most heavily. But to-night there is no more I can effect ; I must even wait for the morrow !”

Soon after the Earl of Nithsdale had been reconducted to his lodgings in the Tower, he heard the striking of the chapel-clock : “ It is now more than an hour,” he thought, “ since the court broke up. By this time the news has reached her. By this time my dear wife knows my sentence, and those hopes which she was resolved to cherish, and which she never would allow me gradually to undermine, have been destroyed at one rude blow. Would I could know how it fares with her, how she supports the shock ! To-morrow I shall see her ; and strange is it, but I dread to see her — I dread the sight of her despair. Oh ! were it not better to pass unloved into the grave, than to feel that one’s fate inflicts such exquisite anguish on her, to spare whom a pang such as she now suffers, one would willingly endure any lengthened torture. Yet could I wish to lose one particle of that affection which alone suffices to make life so precious ? It may be cruel, — it may be selfish ; — but no ! I cannot wish her love to be less ! After all, we part but for a time ! I do not doubt that we shall meet where the weary are at rest. And now that all hope is over, my Winifred will assist me to prepare my soul for the great change ; and she will bear to speak placidly and composedly of those happy regions where the fear of parting will never embitter the enjoyment of each other’s presence ! and I shall be able calmly and cheerfully to fulfil my destiny, if I can see her resigned !”

But when the morrow came, and Lady Nithsdale was admitted, he found her far indeed from placidly acquiescing in the fate which he esteemed unavoidable ; but neither was she bewildered with despair, nor dissolved in tears : she was altogether different from anything he had anticipated. Her cheeks were flushed, her eye was brilliant, her manner resolved. He was surprised ; but he rejoiced that his own fortitude was not put to the trial he had dreaded.

“ My Winifred will assist her husband to bear himself as becomes a man and a good Catholic : I see she will avoid unnerving me by her grief ; and among my many causes of

gratitude to her, I may still add this, that she will smooth my passage to a better world. Thanks, my own love, thanks !”

“ And does my lord imagine I could speak, stand, look, move, as I now do, if I believed it would be carried into effect — that sentence, that horrible sentence ! For I was there — I was in Westminster Hall — I heard it ; I saw the axe ! and I saw you, my own dear husband, — I saw you, and I heard your voice, — that voice which thrilled through all the court, which must have penetrated to the inmost recesses of every heart !”

“ Oh, Winifred ! I could almost chide my best beloved for having wantonly, without any adequate motive, exposed her feelings to so needless a trial !”

“ It was not needlessly ; it was not without a motive that I did so : I had the strongest earthly motive. It was with a view of ascertaining my own strength, my fortitude, that I courted what I should otherwise have shrunk from. It was with a view to the accomplishment of that plan which I have long been forming, and which not all the arguments you can adduce shall prevent me from pursuing. It was with a view to self-preservation, — for is not my life wound up in yours ? Think you, in honest truth, think you, I can exist without you ? Do you not believe that if you perish, I shall not survive ?”

“ Nay, nay, my love,” he replied, almost smiling at her vehemence, “ I do believe your affection for me is as strong as ever warmed the pure soul of devoted woman ; still I cannot but think and hope that you will live many, many years, to be a guide and a protectress to our children. Remember, you but share the fate of many other fond and loving wives ! Have not the other condemned lords wives, fond and loving wives ; and must not they endure—— ?”

“ No, no, no ! Speak not of them ! they do not, cannot love their husbands as I love you ; for have they husbands so worthy of their love ? What is the wild Lord Wintoun, the Lord Kenmure, or the good old Lord Nairne ? The Lord Derwentwater, I grant you, is a worthy gentleman ; — but what are they, any of them, when compared with you ?”

“ But, my sweet Winifred, to die is the doom of all created beings. Many have loved before ; and of all who have ever loved, one must survive. It is a sad, it is a painful truth ;

but it is a most plain and undeniable one. Then why should not this be borne as patiently as the same bereavement by any other means? A long illness would reconcile you to the event! and yet would you wish me to endure lengthened bodily ills? Should you not rather rejoice that I shall thus be spared all the protracted sufferings of sickness, and that, comparatively speaking, I shall thus be exempted from the pains of death; that I shall pass from earth with all my intellects unimpaired, in the full enjoyment of my faculties! Could there be any satisfaction in marking the decaying mind, the enfeebled spirit, the soul waxing weak, as the body sinks under the effects of some wasting malady? Yet how often has the most devoted affection watched all these humiliating and painful harbingers of death, till the mourner has been brought to look upon the dreaded bereavement almost in the light of a blessing? But is there any consolation in this? Would one not rather choose that the memory of the departed should be undimmed, unpolluted by the recollection of mortal decay?"

"Your words are beautiful! I love to hear your voice! it thrills like music through my heart! The thoughts are noble, lofty, pure, and holy; but they persuade me not! As I gaze on you, as I listen to you, I only feel the more, that life without you is not life: it is a blank! — a dark and dreary chasm into which I dare not look: that I must, must save you; and that if you love me, you will give heed to me, and that you will agree to what I shall propose."

"Oh, Winifred! this is cruel kindness. It is cruel to wean me from the thoughts of death, which I have almost taught myself to love, to lure me back to those of life, which, alas! possesses only too many charms for me!"

There was a tenderness in the tone and the manner which gave her hope that she had worked upon him. She felt that love for her, and pity for her sorrows, might at this moment induce him to listen; and she opened to him the plan she had formed for his escape.

But she had scarcely detailed her proposed measures, when he vehemently refused to engage in what he thought could not be carried into execution without compromising others. Desperate at the ill-success which attended her efforts, she

abandoned herself to grief: she strove not to control her feelings; she wrung her hands, she wept in hopeless agony.

Meanwhile he paced the apartment in anguish not less acute. He accused himself of cruelty towards her when he witnessed her desperation; and yet he could not bring himself to agree to measures which he deemed degrading, and in the success of which he placed little reliance.

Such moments comprise a greater sum of suffering than is spread over many a common life. At length he stopped before her.

“Winifred, my wife, my honoured wife! Urge me not to anything unworthy. Call up that noble spirit, which has ever deserved my respect, my admiration, as much as your beauty and your tenderness have won my love! Now listen to me in return!”

In a moment her attention was riveted. She scarcely breathed; she listened as though she would devour each word that fell from his lips, in ardent hope that he might himself have struck out some plan which she might execute.

“I have ever been unwilling to present petitions to the king, or to the government. All that I could in honour urge in self-defence, all that I could in honesty profess for the future, has been already stated in my answer to the impeachment, and in my address to my peers yesterday. I have been, and still am, unwilling to crave mercy at the hands of one who owes me nothing; from whom I have no right to expect it; — but that you should not reproach me with wilfully neglecting any means of safety, I will consent to a petition being presented to King George by you yourself. If anything can move him, it must be the sight of distress such as yours, — and in such a form as that!” he added, looking upon her, as, like a marble statue, she sat with lips apart, her slender throat bent forward, and her eyes fixed upon him. “He cannot behold thee unmoved! It may avail thee something in future, if it serve not me!” he murmured in a low voice.

“Oh! do not trust to the pity of those who have already proved themselves so ruthless: trust rather to the zeal of your own wife, and our faithful Amy Evans!”

“I will trust to your zeal, my love, but let it be employed in such a manner as befits us both; and doubly precious will life be to me if ’tis to you I owe it!”

“ And if, as I expect, the king is obdurate ? for he fears you ; he fears the unconquerable fidelity of your family to the Stuarts, and he fears the influence of your high character : he fears, — therefore, will not pardon you ! ”

“ There is the general petition to parliament, to which I have agreed to put my name.”

“ And if that should fail ? ”

“ Then, my love, you must prove that you are a Christian, and a Catholic, and that you have not forgotten the exhortations to faith, submission and patience, which good Father Albert gave you in your youth, and which you tell me he has so often repeated by letter.”

“ Nay, nay. If all these fail, then promise me that you will not reject the means I will offer you ; that you will not be more merciless than the king himself ; that you will not obstinately refuse to save from despair one who has ever loved you with most true faith ! ”

“ Oh, Winifred ! ”

“ Promise that you will listen to my plans ; that you will maturely consider them ; that, if practicable, you will not reject them ; and I will present the petition, I will cling to the knees of the king, I will wring mercy from him if it be possible ; and if he pardons you, I will honour him, I will love him, and I will ever esteem him worthy to be the monarch of these fair realms by the qualities of the heart, as I already believe him to be so by those of the head ! Only promise me that, if all this should fail, you will not condemn me always to plead in vain, that you, at least, will not turn away from my prayer, that you will listen.”

“ If all other means should fail, then — then, my love, I will listen attentively, calmly, to all you may urge.”

“ Thanks, I am satisfied,” replied Lady Nithsdale, resolved to interpret his measured expressions into an implied assent to all her wishes : “ and now prepare the petition, my dearest lord, and I will lose no time in taking measures that it should reach the king himself. These hands shall give it him. I know how I may gain access to his presence. I will see him with my own eyes ; and he shall refuse me with his own lips, if he cannot be worked upon to mercy. When will it be ready ? ”

“ Patience, my love. I must consult with those who can

assist me in so wording it that I may not risk giving offence. In some days it shall be drawn up."

"Why such delay? Time is precious. Talk not of days. To-morrow, or, at farthest, the day after, — the twelfth. Tell me when, that I may seek the kind Mrs. Morgan, and with her arrange all for my admission to St. James's."

"Gently, gently, dearest Winifred. We must do nothing rashly. By the thirteenth the petition shall be ready, and we will hope it may find such grace as shall spare you all further fears on my account. Meantime, compose yourself."

Nay, am I not composed? Surely I think I must be a stock, a stone, thus to preserve my senses, and move, act, speak, like other people. I sometimes fancy I must lack natural feeling; for it is not grief that possesses my soul, but hope and fear so strangely blended that there is no space left for grief!"

"My Winifred need not tax herself with coldness!" replied the earl tenderly, but sadly, smiling as he looked upon her. Then, resuming a calm and business-like tone, he added, "The Lord Nairne's lady, as I understand, is also to present an address to the king, and there seems good hope that hers may be graciously received. If you could accompany her it might be well; for she is a staid and discreet person, and has been much used to courts. She was for some years in great favour with Queen Anne. She may support and guide you; and, indeed, Winifred, you must not overtask yourself!"

He was half alarmed at the reliance she seemed to place on her own strength, and feared it might proceed from a feverish state of excitement.

"I will wait upon the Lady Nairne to-day," resumed Lady Nithsdale. "I will do anything, everything, you suggest, now you have promised in return to listen to my arguments."

She instinctively worded his promise as vaguely as he had done himself, fearing to alarm him into a declaration that he had only promised to listen to, not to comply with, her wishes. Without being exactly conscious that she was endeavouring to cheat him into attending to his own safety, she hoped to accustom him to the idea, that if she adopted every plan he proposed, he was thereby pledged to follow hers upon the failure of his own

CHAPTER XXI.

Thy bosom hath been sear'd by pride of state,
Hard, cold, and dead to nature's sympathies ;
Nor know'st thou virtue's awe — nor gentleness,
How sovereign 'tis ! Nor hast thou felt
The nameless fear and humbleness of mind
'Gender'd by sight of others' misery.

MS. Play.

WHEN the Countess of Nithsdale quitted the Tower, she lost no time in despatching to her lord the lawyer in whose discretion he had most confidence, and who had previously assisted him in drawing up his written answer to the impeachment.

She then waited on the Lady Nairne, whom she found surrounded by her family ; a quiet and sober matron, upon whose composed countenance, and in whose well-ordered deportment, it would have been difficult to detect the passions that might, or might not, affect the soul within.

The countess was introduced with all the form of those more ceremonious times, and the Lady Nairne received her with due attention. It was not till Lady Nithsdale had made many apologies for so sudden a visit to one with whose acquaintance she had not previously been honoured, and had begun to explain the cause of her intrusion, that the vehemence of her emotion made her break through the trammels imposed by custom ; and she adjured her, by her own hope of saving her husband's life, by her own hope of preserving a father to her children, to give her the support of her company and countenance to the king's presence.

The Lady Nairne at first hesitated, for she was not, like the Duchess of Montrose, the ardent, devoted friend, nor, like Mrs. Morgan, the creature of impulse ; but a sober and prudent lady, past the age of enthusiasm, occupied with her own interests, and discreetly intent on availing herself of every means calculated to preserve a father to her numerous family.

After some moments spent in consideration, she came to the conclusion that in all probability the king would be loth, in the very outset of his reign, to reject at once the prayers of two disconsolate wives ; and that, of the two, there was every reason to believe that her lord was likely to be more favourably looked upon than the Earl of Nithsdale ; and that, conse-

quently, his countess's presence might rather advance, than mar, her own chance of success.

Having thus reflected, she politely acquiesced in the Lady Nithsdale's wishes ; nor need we imagine she felt no sympathy for a fellow-creature in distress so similar to her own. On the contrary, she was happy to afford her any assistance that did not tend to injure her own cause ; but bred in courts, and accustomed to repress all outward demonstrations of unusual feeling, she replied in so measured, though not unkind a tone, that the glowing expressions of gratitude, which were ready to overflow from the countess's heart, were frozen on her lips, and her thanks were couched in terms scarcely less measured than the Lady Nairne's consent.

Having, however, arranged that when the petitions of their lords were ready they would again meet, and that meanwhile Lady Nithsdale should procure the assistance of a friend who was well acquainted with the king's person, (for his outward appearance was equally unknown to both the Jacobite ladies.) the Lady Nairne accompanied the countess to the head of the stairs, and, with all the courtly forms of good breeding, dismissed her guest.

Lady Nithsdale then hastened to the warm-hearted Mrs. Morgan, and, explaining to her the nature of the service she required, obtained her cordial assurance that she would be in readiness to accompany Lady Nairne and herself to St. James's on the evening of the 13th, when she had no doubt she should be able so to place them as that they might personally present their petitions to his majesty. The expansion of heart, the melting sympathy of Mrs. Morgan, were a balm to Lady Nithsdale's feelings, after the coldness and prudence of the Lady Nairne. But deep grief is in its nature selfish.

It may be true, that unclouded prosperity sometimes hardens the heart, or, at least, renders the impressions made by sorrows which have never been felt, and are consequently ill understood, but slight and transient ; and it is also true, that the having once known grief opens the heart to the full comprehension of the feelings of one's fellows, — but then it must be a grief that is past. While writhing under present anxiety, while smarting under present agony, the warmest, the most capacious heart is unable to take in the sufferings of others. Human nature, in all things limited, can feel but to a certain

extent ; and when every faculty of the soul is absorbed by present, actual evil, there is no power left to feel that which is not personal. Mrs. Morgan, happy and prosperous herself, had leisure to give herself to the sufferings of Lady Nithsdale ; she adopted them as her own — she entered into them heart and soul ! While Lady Nairne, with all most dear to herself at stake, could not but consider the concerns of another as of very secondary interest, and would not have felt herself justified in allowing compassion for a person, in no way connected with her, to interfere in the slightest degree with her duties as a wife and a mother. Lady Nithsdale would have been the first to admit such views to be most just and fitting ; but still the expressions of gratitude, which had before been chilled, poured forth in eloquent profusion when addressing Mrs. Morgan.

Upon her return to her own lodgings, she perceived that Amy Evans learned with satisfaction, that a petition was to be presented to the king, before the attempt was made to effect her lord's evasion. Although resolved to assist to the utmost in carrying her lady's plan into execution, she felt that escape from the Tower must be impracticable ; while, on the contrary, it seemed to her impossible that any being with human affections could resist the voice, the words, the pleading looks of her dear mistress !

The 13th arrived. Lady Nithsdale attired herself in deep mourning, considering such a habit most suitable to a person under her circumstances ; but Amy gave an involuntary shudder as she looked upon her lady in this ominous garb. The expression of her countenance did not escape Lady Nithsdale's observation : " Start not, dear Amy, at this sad-coloured dress. If it betokens anything, 'tis but the failure of my this day's business. But it is not on the result of this day that I rest my hopes. I wait on the king, for my lord wishes me to do so, and I cannot choose but execute his behests ; but I have slender hope of moving him by my entreaties. It is to ourselves that we must look ; to our own efforts, Amy, aided by that Divine Providence, who deserts not the humble in their need. I feel hope, strong hope, within my bosom ; but it is not of finding favour at the court. No ! it is to a higher power I look for salvation, — on Heaven that I place my reliance ! "

“Assuredly, most honoured madam. But it is right to try every means that Providence places within our reach.”

“Yes, Amy, and I will leave none untried.”

Mrs. Morgan and the Lady Nairne were now announced, and the Countess of Nithsdale entered the coach to proceed with them to St. James’s.

Mrs. Morgan found no difficulty in procuring their admission to the antechamber through which the king must necessarily pass in his way from his own apartments to the drawing-room. The ladies placed themselves in the recess of the middle window of the three, which occupied one side of the apartment; and, somewhat concealed by the curtains, they there awaited the coming of the king.

Upon the most trifling occasions expectation makes the heart beat: the watching the opening of a door, the entrance of any particular individual, excites a certain emotion. What must then have been the feelings of the countess as, with her eyes riveted upon the folding-doors through which his majesty was to enter, she fancied every moment she saw them move! And when they unfolded, and some of the lords of the bed-chamber passed forth, she each time turned an anxious, inquiring glance on Mrs. Morgan, to know if this might be the king.

While she was thus in breathless expectation, the Duke of Montrose approached to cheer her, by a few words of kindly encouragement; but she made him a sign not to claim her acquaintance; for the Earl of Pembroke having, at the time he promised to interest himself in her favour, desired her not to address him in public, she deemed that any exertion the duke might subsequently make for her, would come with the more effect from one who did not appear in the light of a personal friend.

Every moment seemed to Lady Nithsdale an age. Even the composed Lady Nairne changed colour: and Mrs. Morgan looked from one to the other, and frequently pressed Lady Nithsdale’s hand, and bade her be of good cheer and not lose courage. She assured her the king would not long tarry; that he was usually most punctual in his habits; and, in an agitated tone, uttered all the consoling nothings, which are poured into the ear of those, whose highly-wrought nerves are expected to give way at the moment it is most needful they should be collected.

At length the door again opened: there was a general stillness. Every one who could command a view of the persons approaching, arranged his countenance, composed his demeanour; the court gossip, which had been buzzed around, was suddenly hushed, the lounging attitude relinquished, the droll anecdote suspended, and the laugh silenced.

A pale man, with a good, rather than a dignified aspect, entered the apartment. He wore a tie-wig. His dress was plain, and all of one sober colour, with stockings of the same hue.

Lady Nithsdale read in Mrs. Morgan's glance that it was the king, and she hastened from the recess of the window. She threw herself on her knees before him, as he reached the middle of the room, telling him she was the unfortunate Countess of Nithsdale, who implored mercy for her husband. She spoke in French, as the king's knowledge of English was very imperfect. She held up the petition with both her hands, entreating him to read it; but the king waved her off, and attempted to proceed.

The Lady Nairne also was not backward in pressing her petition, and the king impatiently thrust them both from him, and passed on towards the opposite door; but the Lady Nithsdale clung to the skirts of his coat.

As she pleaded, and pleaded in vain, she grew desperate,—almost maddened. Still in vain! The king listened not to her prayers. She would not let go her hold, and was actually dragged in her agony from the middle of the antechamber to the door of the drawing-room, when one of the lords in attendance forcibly wrested the king's dress from her hands, while another took her round the waist and raised her from the ground.

No sooner did she feel the touch of a stranger than all her dignity and self-possession returned. Quickly disengaging herself from his grasp, she stood for a moment looking on the door by which the monarch had retired. Her bosom swelled with indignation—the blood of all her noble ancestors mantled in her face. That she, the daughter of the Duke of Powis, should thus be treated! rejected!—cast off like the scum of the earth! when it was well-known the king received the petitions of the meanest of his subjects!—that she should be dragged on the very ground—that she should be spurned

from his feet — that she should be forcibly seized by rude hands !

All around seemed to swim before her eyes ; and had it not been for Mrs. Morgan's kindly help, she must have fallen on the floor. Her friend gently assisted her to a seat, and then a flood of tears came to her relief.

Meanwhile, the petition which she had attempted to thrust into the king's pocket had fallen to the ground, and one of the gentlemen in waiting brought it to her. The Lady Nairne had already succeeded in delivering her's to one who promised it should reach the king ; and the Lady Nithsdale, when somewhat recovered from the agitation of this strange scene, hastily wrote a few lines in pencil, addressed to the Earl of Dorset, who was the lord of the bed-chamber then in waiting, and entrusted it, with the petition, to Mrs. Morgan.

Her friend left the countess for a while, and entered the drawing-room ; but to one so zealous, so devoted, so warm-hearted, the brilliant circle seemed for a moment a confused and bewildering scene. She had just parted from a fellow-creature, whose soul was harrowed by the most agonising emotions, her face pale and haggard, her dress disordered ; she had just been witnessing grief, — desperation in its most touching form ; and in one moment she found herself among gay and thoughtless creatures, all intent on their own objects of vanity and amusement ! The studied attire, the conscious simper, the pretty blush, the down-cast lid, the bewitching smile, the graceful turn of the swan-like throat, the brilliant flash of the sparkling eye, the affected flutter of the fan, the thousand varied attractions, were all put in requisition to charm, to dazzle, or to subdue. She heard around her the playful banter, the witty repartee, the implied compliment, the softened whisper, the politely turned attack, the sharp retort ; and she wondered for the moment how such frivolities could possess so absorbing an interest !

She was threading her way through the gay and dazzling throng, when her progress was arrested by the circle around the king himself. She was compelled to wait with outward composure, although she was secretly all impatience to execute the commission entrusted to her, and to return quickly to Lady Nithsdale. As she stood watching for an opportunity of

slipping past unperceived, she found herself within sight, though scarcely within hearing, of the Duchess of Montrose.

Two young men were evidently paying her the sort of homage permitted by the gallantry of the day. She was answering each with animation and spirit. There was the passing frown, the lightening smile, the assumed air of absence if anything was said which she wished not to hear.

The attention of one of the gentlemen being presently withdrawn by some of his acquaintance, it appeared to Mrs. Morgan that the other continued the conversation in a more earnest tone than before. She fancied she saw a blush mantle on the cheek of the duchess, — for a moment she appeared distressed. The duke, who was near, and was engaged in deep and serious discourse with the Earl of Pembroke, had taken no part in the playful conversation which was passing behind him. But the duchess, making some light evasive answer, suddenly tapped her husband's arm with her fan, and caused him to turn round. She then seemed to be detailing to him the point in dispute, and applying to him as umpire. Mrs. Morgan watched all these little manœuvres ; for she could not help wondering how one who professed friendship for the Countess of Nithsdale could thus give herself up to worldly vanities and interests. When first she caught a view of the Duke of Montrose's countenance, it bore the traces of sadness ; but as he listened to his graceful and lively wife, it brightened into a bland expression of amusement. Upon the duke's being thus called to join in the discourse, the young gallant seemed discomposed but for an instant, and apparently recovering himself, at once entered into the spirit of the duchess's bantering ; and Mrs. Morgan again thought of the countess's despair, and mentally exclaimed, " If she could see how gaily her friend, the lively duchess, can smile even now ! " But she did not long feel thus. In a few moments the duke, in a low voice, made some communication to his wife, which had the effect of chasing the roses from her cheeks, and dimming the brilliancy of her smile. The dark and laughing eyes no longer sparkled with the gay consciousness of charming, but were fixed on her husband's face with an expression of dismay and woe.

She looked round as if wishing to make her escape ; then, perceiving Mrs. Morgan, she rushed to her : —

“ Oh, Mrs. Morgan !” she exclaimed, “ is this all true ? You were with her, were you not ? ”

“ Yes, your grace ; I was with the Countess of Nithsdale, even now, in the antechamber.”

“ Is she still there ? I must go to her ; I must go instantly to my poor cousin Winifred ! ”

“ Stay, dearest Christian ! ” interposed the duke ; “ Lady Nithsdale herself, this very evening, motioned me not to speak to her ; and the Earl of Pembroke says, the less we put ourselves forward unnecessarily, the more effectually we may be able to serve her. Be not so rash and thoughtless. That warm heart of yours carries you beyond the bounds of prudence, dear Christian ! ” — but the duke looked at her with pleasure and kindness while he checked her.

“ Alas ! and is it true that the king dragged her all across the room, and would not give heed to her petition ? ”

“ Most true, your grace ! ”

“ Oh, my lord duke ! but indeed this was not kind and right in his majesty,” said the duchess, turning once more towards her husband an appealing glance.

“ We must not speak treason, dearest Christian, here, in the royal presence ! ”

“ Nay ! I cannot but think this was cruel : — and may I not go to her ? Is she still in the antechamber, Mrs. Morgan ? ”

“ Yes, but she will be gone in a few moments ; and your grace may rest assured that the countess shall meet with every kindness and attention.”

“ You are a good, kind soul,” said the duchess ; “ and my poor cousin has many times told me how much she owes to your friendly sympathy.”

The king had changed his position, and the passage was now free. Mrs. Morgan, after briefly explaining her errand to the duchess, passed on to where the Earl of Dorset was engaged at cards with the Prince. She contrived, however, to give him the packet ; and received his assurance, that when the game was over, he would peruse and attend to its contents.

As she wound her way back, she found that the king’s rejection of the Ladies Nithsdale’s and Nairne’s petitions had been rapidly communicated from mouth to mouth ; and that, except in the immediate hearing of the king, no other subject was discussed. She could scarcely make her way through the

crowd, so anxious was every one to learn from her each detail of what had really passed. All were eager, some indignant ; but some urged, that if his majesty once received a wife's petition, it would be most difficult then to refuse, and that unless he had made up his mind to pardon treason — proved and acknowledged treason — he had no other course to pursue than to avoid witnessing grief he could not alleviate ; that his sudden, though somewhat undignified flight, did not by any means bear the character of hardness, but, on the contrary, might lead a candid mind to believe he durst not trust himself to witness the desperation of two disconsolate wives.

It was with difficulty that Mrs. Morgan regained the door, and hastened back to the friend who stood so much in need of her consoling sympathy. Slowly and drearily did they retrace their steps.

The Lady Nairne, who had secret information that her application was likely to be successful, was comparatively composed, and bore what should have seemed an equal disappointment with equanimity and resignation.

The Countess of Nithsdale, exhausted, humbled, indignant, mortified, grieved, was for the time more thoroughly subdued than she had ever been before.

And yet she had not been sanguine as to the result of this petition ; those means on which she most relied were still available ; but to her lofty spirit, the contempt with which she had been treated, in sight of all the court, gave her a painful sensation of degradation. It was some slight consolation to her to learn from Mrs. Morgan, what the Duchess of Montrose the next day confirmed still more strongly, that when the circumstances which had occurred without became generally whispered through the drawing-room, the harshness of the king had been the topic of conversation the whole evening.

With her gentleness there was blended a certain degree of pride, a consciousness of being the scion of an ancient stock, which would have rendered it impossible for a mean thought even to pass through her mind, and which ever enabled her to entrench herself in dignified reserve, should others neglect to pay that respect due to noble birth, which, unless forgotten by them, would never be remembered by herself.

CHAPTER XXII.

Distress is virtue's opportunity. — Southern.

THE Earl of Nithsdale felt even more keenly than did the countess the indignity with which she had been treated in her interview with the king.

His dark eye flashed, he bit his compressed lip till the blood almost started; he paced the apartment with hasty strides, as he pictured to himself his graceful, his delicate, his shrinking Winifred, on whose fair form he would scarcely allow the winds to blow too roughly, dragged along the floor, the rude hands of strangers round that slender waist; and it was then he felt indeed that he was a prisoner, powerless to defend her whom he had sworn to cherish! The bars, the bolts, the high walls, the moat, the guards! oh, how his soul rebelled against them all! How agonising was the impotent indignation which possessed his every faculty.

Lady Nithsdale grieved to see his agitation, and yet from his very agitation she gathered hope that she might eventually work him to her wishes.

Meanwhile, with the assistance of Amy, she had procured most of the articles necessary for the disguise of her husband; and although resolved that every other means of safety should be tried, she still kept her mind fixed upon this last resource. The consciousness of having still a point to look to, something still to rest upon when all else failed, sustained her courage; but at the same time it prevented her attempting to submit to an event, which, in the judgment of others, was now inevitable. She could not even think of resignation; on the contrary, with this secret hope in her heart, and this plan in her mind, she would have been alarmed at her own want of reliance in that plan, had she tried to school her feelings to acquiesce in the fatal doom.

A few days after the countess's unsuccessful application to the king, the resolution was taken in council that the sentence passed upon the rebel lords should be carried into execution without delay, and on the 18th the necessary warrants and

orders were despatched, both to the Lieutenant of the Tower, and to the Sheriffs of the city of London and Middlesex.

There was a startling reality in these measures that for the moment shook her inmost soul ; yet she would not allow herself to dwell upon the intelligence ; she scarcely gave herself time to reflect, but all the more strenuously busied herself in seeing that her preparations were complete ; and she strove to interest herself in the attempt made the following day by the Countess of Derwentwater to move the king to mercy. Accompanied by the Duchesses of Cleveland and of Bolton, and by many other ladies of rank, she was introduced by the Dukes of St. Albans and of Richmond, to the king's presence, and humbly implored his clemency ; but her application met with no better success than the Lady Nithsdale's more passionate appeal.

It was therefore arranged by the wives of all the condemned lords, that two days afterwards, on February the 21st, they should repair to the lobby of the House of Peers, and there implore the intercession of their lordships with the king.

More than twenty other ladies of the very first distinction accompanied them. It might have moved the most unfeeling to behold so many of the fairest and the noblest of the realm in such deep and unfeigned distress. But though among the mourning group there were many countenances which bore the traces of intense anxiety, many whose expression of grief amounted almost to despair, some perhaps who might boast of greater positive beauty of feature, on none did sorrow sit with so touching a grace as on the Countess of Nithsdale. The wan transparency of her naturally pale complexion, the refined cast of her features, which seemed moulded only to express the highest and purest affections of the soul, assorted well with the situation of deep interest in which she was placed.

But on this occasion the hearts of all seemed steeled against them. Their application met with little attention : no measures were taken, no motion made, in consequence of their petition. In blank disappointment each sought again her disconsolate, her widowed home.

Dispirited, but not utterly hopeless, they on the following day, the 22d, repaired again to Westminster Hall, and with them a still greater attendance of the first, and the noblest, of

the ladies who adorned the British court ; and with still more passionate earnestness they appealed to both houses of parliament.

In the Commons their petitions met with no success. Notwithstanding an eloquent address on the part of Sir Richard Steele, the court party moved that the discussion should be adjourned to the 1st of March, and carried it by a majority of seven voices.

With the Lords they found more favour. Although the Duke of Richmond, even when presenting the Earl of Derwentwater's petition, declared that he would himself vote against it, yet others spoke warmly and eloquently in behalf of men, who, though mistaken, had still acted from conscientious motives.

The Earl of Danby, moved with pity for the Lord Nairne's numerous family, urged strongly that the petitions of the several lords should be received and read. The Lord Townshend and several others, who upon all occasions had given undoubted proofs of their attachment to the present government, supported the contrary opinion ; when, to the surprise of many, the Earl of Nottingham declared in favour of the petitions being read. As president of the council he drew with him many peers, and the motion was carried by nine or ten voices.

Then came the question whether in the case of an impeachment the king possessed the power to reprieve. It was now that the Earl of Pembroke redeemed his pledge of exerting himself in Lady Nithsdale's favour. His animated and eloquent address carried with him the sense of the house ; and, with the assistance of the Duke of Montrose, the king's power to pardon was carried in the affirmative.

This was followed by a motion for an address to the king that, as he had the power to do so, he would be pleased to grant a reprieve to the lords who lay under sentence of death, which, although opposed by the firmest friends of government, was also carried.

Lady Nithsdale's heart bounded within her ; hope for a moment danced in her bosom, and lighted up her cheek with a passing bloom. Her joy was however doomed to be evanescent, for another lord represented that " though clemency was one of the brightest virtues which adorn and sup-

port a crown, yet in his opinion the same should be exercised only on proper objects ;” and he therefore moved, “ that they should address the king to reprieve such of the condemned lords as deserved his mercy, and approved themselves worthy of this intercession, and not all indiscriminately.”

The amendment was carried by two voices only, but it was carried ;—and her heart once more sank within her. This salvo blasted all her hopes. She was assured it was aimed at the exclusion of those who would not subscribe such a petition as some of the peers had themselves prepared,—a thing she knew her husband would never submit to ; nor, as she herself declared, would she have wished to preserve his life on such terms.

Still, however, the address to the king had passed generally, and she thought she might turn this circumstance to account in lulling the vigilance of the guards. She lost no time in quitting the House of Lords, and hastening to the Tower ; where, affecting an air of joy and security, she told the soldiers as she passed, that she brought joyful tidings to the prisoners, for that the petition had passed in their favour. She then gave them some money to drink to the lords and his majesty ; but she prudently made it but a trifling sum, hoping thereby to secure their good-will, without awakening in them any suspicion of design on her part.

And now there remained but the one last resource. She trembled as she thought that, though all was in her own mind prepared, the most difficult point remained yet to be accomplished,—her husband had not yet consented to the disguise she proposed ; and although he had not retracted his promise of giving her proposal a fair and patient hearing, she had in fact extracted from him nothing more. If he should now pertinaciously refuse to accede to it ! Oh, no, it was impossible. He could not doom her to such hopeless, unutterable misery !

Trembling, agitated, yet worked up to the utmost pitch of courage and resolution, she reached his apartment. She staggered into the room ; and flinging herself into his arms, she sobbed convulsively on his bosom. She could not speak : but after a few moments he said, with hopeless composure and tenderness,—

“ So, my poor Winifred, both houses have then rejected

our prayers ! Alas for you, my love ! would I were able to give you consolation ! would I could alleviate your sorrows !”

“ You can ! you can ! You, and you alone, can now save me from despair !” she exclaimed with passion. Her eyes were dry, her cheek was flushed, her whole countenance seemed suddenly inspired : “ My life, my existence, are in your hands ! You have but to will it, to make me the happiest of wives, of mothers ! If I am doomed to the early death of the heart-broken,” she continued almost in a threatening tone, “ or if I am doomed to drag on a weary, joyless existence, a lingering death-like life, in which the welfare of my soul—yes, the salvation of a precious soul, is in peril, for I shall murmur, I shall repine—there is no resignation here—I feel I shall not submit as it would be my duty to do :—if such is the fate before me, it will be *you* who doom me to it ! I can save you—I am sure I can ! If you refuse to lend yourself to the measures I propose, it will be *you* who destroy my happiness in this world, *you* who peril my salvation in the next !”

There was a restless fire in her eye, an energy in her manner, a fearful inspiration about her, that awed, while it touched him. He could not but think what must be the strength of those feelings which could so transport her out of herself ; which could change the mild, timid, shrinking wife, into the inspired threatening Sibyl !

“ Hush, hush, my love ! you know not what you say !”

She looked wildly and doubtingly around her ; then bursting into tears,—“ Alas ! alas ! what have I uttered ?”—and falling on her knees, with clasped hands raised to heaven,—“ Pardon, O most merciful Being ; pardon for my wild and wicked words ! O Thou on whom my reliance is placed, Thou in whose providence I trust,—cast me not off for these hasty words, wrung from me by insufferable anguish ! And thou, my lord, my love, my husband, urge me not to despair ! This brain may become unsettled, reason may give way, I may again be hurried into impious ravings !—Oh, take pity upon me, dearest, dearest husband !” She clung to his knees ; she stretched her beseeching arms towards him.

“ Do with me what thou wilt, Winifred. If this is weakness, I am weak ! If this is cowardice, I am no longer brave ! Command me ! guide me !—I am but the instrument in thy hands, my wife ! I would sacrifice my life to honour ; but

if there is dishonour in my attempt to escape, I will sacrifice honour itself to you, my love !”

“ It is not the sacrifice of your honour I demand ; yourself cannot value it more highly than does your wife. They carried the address to the king, but it was coupled with an amendment that it should only apply to those who would sign a petition of their own framing. I knew you would not—I do not ask you to do so. Your honour is precious to me as your life—more precious than your life !—but there is no dishonour in escaping from a cruel and an ignominious death !”

“ Not ignominious, Winifred ; an honourable death !”

“ From a cruel and an unjust death !—a treacherous death ! Was it not upon the understanding that your lives were to be spared that you all surrendered at Preston ? Was it not to avoid useless effusion of blood that you yielded ? and that you advised others to yield ? Would it not have been easier and sweeter to have perished in battle, than to die on the scaffold, as your fellow prisoners must ? No ! there is no dishonour in escaping from tyranny !” She spoke with energy, for the first time uttering the words of “ death ” and “ scaffold,” which had never before found their way to her lips.

“ Have I not said it, my love ? I am ready to follow your injunctions. Do with me what you will.”

“ You have promised it, you have sworn it !”—and her face was radiant with joy. “ My own love ! you are mine once more ! We shall not be parted ;—we shall live and die together,—we shall grow old together ! Oh, thanks ! thanks !” and her imagination had overleaped all the bars and bolts, the dreary boundaries of the prison. She felt they were at large to roam over the wide world together. He gave her one sad and grateful kiss, and walked to the window to conceal his emotion ; but she saw the expression of his countenance as he slowly surveyed the court-yard, and his eye rested on each sentry as he paced in his appointed spot.

She perceived the almost mocking smile which passed transiently over his lips ; and she plainly read how vain he thought her hopes, how unavailing would prove the consent she had extorted from him.

“ You think my schemes all visionary !—you think me scarcely in my right senses !—you deem me already crazed with grief !”

"Nay, my love, I think your wishes run beyond your judgment, and I fear you are only preparing for yourself a more bitter disappointment. The blow will fall the heavier for coming upon you in your present state of excitement. It would tend more to your future peace of mind if, discarding all worldly thoughts, you would fix your hopes, and would assist me in fixing mine, on heaven, and heaven alone."

"And think you it could tend to my future peace of mind, the reflection that one hour of bold prudence, one hour of steady perseverance in the execution of the scheme already formed, might have led to a reunion for life?—perhaps a long and happy life! You would not surely retract the vow so solemnly made, even now?" she added in a reproachful tone.

"No! I have promised; and I will keep my promise!"

She pressed his hand in token of gratitude. "Then I must away. There are still some with whom I have need to communicate. Do not look for me early to-morrow: I shall not be with you till towards dusk,—and then ——"

"Not till evening? The last day must I be deprived of your presence till evening?"

"The first day of your deliverance, my love!—the first of many days of liberty and happiness!"

He dropped his eyes. He would not sadden her by his own forebodings. And yet he felt he should be permitted to look on her for so short a space, that it was with difficulty he could bring himself to lose sight of her for a moment.

It was already night; but he watched her from his prison window, and fancied he could detect her beloved form as she glided down the steps leading to the archway. He stood gazing at the spot till tears suffused his eyes; and he flung himself upon a seat, determined to wrestle with his emotions.

When alone,—when not exposed to the influence of her tenderness,—he looked on death with perfect composure, and almost wished his course was run, and that the inevitable moment was arrived. The hopes with which she strove to inspire him unsettled and distracted him; and then he reproached himself for such weakness. Yet how collect his thoughts? how temper them down to a tranquil, firm, unmoved acquiescence in his doom, when all his energies would be required for the enterprise which was to restore him to life,

to love, and to liberty ? He strove to forget the plan in agitation. He tried to abstract himself in prayer ; but when most he hoped to have spiritualised his meditations, visions of the future would flash across his mind, painful anticipations of what would be his Winifred's desperation upon the failure of her attempt, agonising shame at the idea of being discovered and caught in the act of evasion, dread of appearing in the undignified position of a reclaimed fugitive, dragged unwillingly to the block, instead of the loyal martyr, boldly, firmly, with an unconstrained step, mounting the scaffold, to consummate the sacrifice he had of his own free will chosen to make.

He almost repented the promise he had given ; he longed for the repose of hopelessness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

*Methinks my soul is rous'd to her last work,
Has much to do, and little time to spare.*

DRYDEN

THE Countess of Nithsdale had quitted her husband. She wound her solitary way through the dreary purlieus which had become only too familiar to her. She had gained the long-wished-for consent ; she had extracted a vow, a solemn vow, from her lord, and she feared not that he would break it : but never did the difficulties of her undertaking appear to her so appalling as at the present moment ; the sentries so innumerable, the guards so alert, the way so long, the walls so lofty, the moat so broad !

While his consent was to be gained, all else seemed easy, but now the dangers rose up in fearful array before her !

But this was not the time to waver. Where could she look for support but to her own unshrinking soul ? Amy, she knew, considered her plan impracticable. To no one else had she imparted it.

During the short time which intervened before she reached her home, she had recovered her confident reliance on the protection of Providence, and on the strength which that Providence would vouchsafe to her ; and with a firm countenance

she informed Amy that her lord's consent was obtained, that every difficulty was smoothing itself before her, and that they had but to go on and prosper.

"Thank Heaven that my lord has consented," answered Amy; "but, dearest madam, is this, in truth, the only hope now left? Here is a packet which arrived even now from the Duchess of Montrose. Who knows but it may contain good news?"

With trembling hands the countess tore it open; but Amy saw with a glance that there was no hope administered by its contents. "No worse news, I trust, madam?"

"No worse than I expected; but read yourself, good Amy. I have nor voice nor eyesight," as she brushed off a tear, "nor strength. All the strength I possess must be reserved for tomorrow."

The duchess's letter told her that the petition from the Lords had received no more favourable answer from the king than "that on this, and all other occasions, he would do what he thought most consistent with the dignity of his crown and the safety of his people." The duchess added, that this answer would next morning be formally announced to the public, but that meanwhile she had hastened to communicate it to her friend, thinking she might deem it advisable to adopt some farther measures, although she scarcely knew what measures to recommend.

In consequence of this information, Lady Nithsdale resolved, as a last resource, in the event of her scheme proving unsuccessful, to prepare for still presenting one more private petition to the king. To this end she appointed Mr. M'Kenzie, an old friend of her lord's, and, through her sister Lady Seaforth, a connexion of her own, to await her on the following evening, at her lodgings. She felt secure of his friendly support in any emergency. She also applied to the Duchess of Buccleugh; who promised, if Lady Nithsdale called upon her to do so, she would be in readiness to accompany her to court.

She passed what remained of that evening, and the early part of the following morning, in completing every arrangement in case of either contingency. Even had not these manifold cares occupied her time, she could scarcely have trusted herself with her husband. Constant, incessant business was absolutely necessary to her. If she had sat down to

think, to calculate the chances, it would have been impossible to her to have preserved the self-command so indispensable to the success of her undertaking.

It was not till towards the afternoon of this trying day, the 23rd, that she desired Amy to request Mrs. Mills would favour her with her company for a few moments.

The compassionate Mrs. Mills instantly obeyed her summons, though almost dreading to find herself in the presence of one whose grief she feared to witness. But Lady Nithsdale was perfectly calm and collected. After thanking her for her constant kindness and hospitality, she at once entered upon the subject ; and telling her that having had such experience of the goodness of her heart, she did not doubt but she would continue to prove herself the kind friend she had ever found her ; and that she would not refuse to accompany her that day to the Tower, in order that, as she was not personally known to the guards and those in attendance, her lord might the more easily pass for her. She then detailed to her the whole plan for his escape, and urged that as this was the very evening preceding the execution, there was no time for doubt and hesitation. She told her all other hope was now at an end. Reprieves had been despatched for the Lords Wintoun, Widdrington, and Nairne ; but at the same time orders had been given for the execution, the next morning, of Lord Derwentwater, Lord Kenmure, and of her husband ! She spoke with a firm voice ; and such was her excited state of hope and resolution, that the words which struck through Amy's heart, which made Mrs. Mills shrink and tremble, seemed as if they were to her but a matter of business.

Mrs. Mills, all agitated and confused, promised to assist to the best of her ability, and Lady Nithsdale instantly overwhelmed her with thanks ; and having despatched Walter Elliot to Mrs. Morgan, to request she also would instantly visit her, she then occupied herself in ascertaining from Amy Evans the exact situation of the house where they were to meet, when she should have succeeded in placing her husband beyond the precincts of the Tower.

Mrs. Morgan delayed not to wait on the countess, who found little difficulty in gaining her consent to any plan which might serve one whom she had quickly learned to love with all the warmth of her enthusiastic heart. Indeed, both she

and Mrs. Mills were so taken by surprise, the case was so pressing, the plan to be so instantly carried into execution, that there was no time for indecision or reflection. They must either doom the Earl of Nithsdale to certain death on the morrow, and his wife to utter despair ; or they must lend themselves to the scheme so warily, so judiciously, so discreetly contrived.

Lady Nithsdale begged Mrs. Morgan, who was of a peculiarly slender make, to put under her own riding-hood that which she had prepared for Mrs. Mills, who was to leave hers in the prison for the earl.

She then hurried them both into the coach ; and repeating her directions, enforcing her counsels, she allowed no pause in the conversation, during which they might have leisure to reflect and to repent.

In their hurry and their astonishment, they thought not of the possible consequences, but submitted to obey Lady Nithsdale in all things, who guided them with the overawing mastery which, at the moment of trial, the stronger mind invariably exercises over those of a more feeble and yielding temperament.

The coach stopped at the Tower. Lady Nithsdale had permission to introduce but one person at a time ; and leaving Mrs. Mills in the carriage, she took Mrs. Morgan with her.

She had not seen her husband since the preceding night, and this was the eve of execution ! If she failed, the morrow would see her a widow ! But she drove such thoughts from her mind ; — she hurried Mrs. Morgan along, — she almost pushed her into the apartment.

Lord Nithsdale rushed to his wife, and pressed her to his bosom. “ Oh, Winifred ! ” he exclaimed, half reproachfully ; “ this long, long, weary day, and I have not seen you ! ”

She disengaged herself from him.

“ I must not look on you,” she said ; “ I must not listen to you — I must not think — we must now act, and not a word must be uttered that is not to the purpose ! Here is my good, kind, dear Mrs. Morgan ! She is, and has been from the first, a true and faithful friend ; and now, dear Mrs. Morgan, we must lose no time in speech or compliment.”

Mrs. Morgan took off the hood, and soon disencumbered herself of the dress, which had been put on over her own.

Lord Nithsdale meanwhile stood by, passive, but miserable. The long morning had appeared to him interminable. The early February twilight had seemed as if it never would arrive, He still looked upon this day as his last on earth ; and his feelings, though not his reason, were almost disposed to murmur at his wife for not being with him during the few remaining hours which they might have passed together. He had to remind himself that she was toiling in his service, not to feel abandoned by her. It was with a strange and mixed sensation that he had watched the waning light. He was impatient for the shades of evening, which he trusted would bring to him the beloved of his soul ; and yet, as he dwelt upon the last rays of sunshine, he felt loth to part with them for ever, — to think that he should never again see that glorious luminary fulfil its course in splendour, and shed its brilliancy on all around ; hateful to him as was the dreary prospect from his prison windows, he now thought with regret that he should never again see its western beams gild the square turrets of the White Tower. At moments he felt life was worth one desperate effort ; but more frequently he hoped, when his Winifred did come, it would be to tell him that her scheme was impracticable, to release him from his vow, and to allow him to meet his fate with dignity and resignation.

She came, and all was turmoil and confusion within his bosom. He was pledged to obey her. Indeed there was no time for argument or remonstrance. She would have listened to none.

Those who stand upon the threshold of the grave — those to whom in a few hours the mysteries of a future existence may all be unfolded — seem as it were a link between the living and the dead, and are ever regarded with a certain awe, as Mrs. Morgan experienced when looking on him of whom she had heard so much — on him for whom, though unknown, she had felt so keenly — on the stranger for whom she was now incurring, what might prove to herself, no inconsiderable peril.

That pensive countenance, that noble brow, those lofty features, all spoke a soul within, which might well justify his wife's devotion, and she felt that such a creature must not perish. She repented not of her consent ; but gladly, willingly, incurred the present risk.

When the change in her dress was effected, Lady Nithsdale conducted her back to the staircase ; begging her, in the hearing of the guards, to lose no time in sending her maid to dress her, and expressing the greatest fear lest, if she did not come immediately, she should be too late to present the last petition that night.

She presently afterwards descended the stairs to meet Mrs. Mills, who, according to their previous arrangement, concealed her face with her handkerchief, as if in tears. When the door was closed she made her take off her own hood, and put on that which Mrs. Morgan had left for her ; and then bidding her assume a more cheerful countenance (in order that when her lord appeared in her dress, he might the more easily personate the lady who had entered weeping and afflicted), she took her by the hand, and led her out of the earl's chamber. In passing through the next room, she said with all the concern imaginable,

"My dear Mrs. Catherine, go in all haste, and send me my waiting-maid. She certainly cannot reflect how late it is. I am to present my petition to-night ; and if I let slip this opportunity, I am undone, for to-morrow will be too late ; hasten her as much as possible, for I shall be on thorns till she comes."

The guards, to whom the countess's liberality the preceding day had endeared her, disturbed her not, but allowed her to pass and repass with her company : the more freely also, as, having been told by her that the imprisoned lords were likely to obtain their liberty, they were not so strictly on the watch as they had hitherto been. All in the outer room, who were chiefly the guards' wives and daughters, seemed to compassionate her exceedingly ; and the sentinel himself opened the door for them. There was nothing in the appearance of the fair and florid Mrs. Mills which could excite the slightest suspicion.

Having seen her safe out, Lady Nithsdale returned to finish dressing her lord. She had prepared false hair of a fair colour ; the more to resemble Mrs. Mills, whose hair was inclined to be flaxen. She coloured his dark eye-brows with light paint ; and she also painted his face with red and white, for there was no time to shave his dark beard. She dressed him in some of her own petticoats, and in the hood Mrs.

Mills had worn. As the evening had by this time closed in, and she feared that the light of candles might betray them, she hastened him from the apartment. She led him by the hand, whilst he held his handkerchief to his eyes; and being dressed in the same dress, and his hair and complexion being made somewhat to resemble those of Mrs. Mills, he easily passed for the weeping young lady whose affliction at having parted for the last time from a dear friend might very naturally be even more overwhelming than when she entered a short time before.

Lady Nithsdale spoke to him in the most piteous tone of voice, bitterly bewailing the negligence of her maid Evans, who had ruined her by her delay. Yet, while she spoke, it almost went against her to accuse of negligence the devoted Amy! Still, addressing the earl, she continued: —

“My dear Mrs. Betty, for the love of God run quickly, and bring her with you. You know my lodging, and if ever you made despatch in your life, do it at present. I am almost distracted with this disappointment.”

The guards opened the door. She was permitted to pass with one friend at a time: they had not kept exact account of the number who had entered, satisfied that all was right while she was accompanied by only one female, and one also whom they believed to have seen so lately enter the chamber within. She went down with him, still conjuring him to make all possible haste.

As soon as he had cleared the door, she made him walk before, lest the sentinel should take notice of his walk; and she still continued to press him to make despatch. At the bottom of the last outer step, she met the faithful Amy Evans, and into her hands she committed him.

She had before engaged Mr. Mills to be in readiness before the Tower, to conduct him to a place of safety, which at that period might be the more easily effected, as, instead of a clear and open space without the walls, the purlieus were choked with mean habitations, with close and narrow alleys. The gates were no sooner passed, than they found themselves in the throng of the most dense and busy part of the London population; but Mr. Mills had looked upon the affair as so very unlikely to succeed, and his astonishment threw him into such a consternation when he actually beheld them, that he was bewildered and quite out of himself.

Amy Evans perceived his confusion, and with that presence of mind which had so justly entitled her to her lady's confidence, instantly decided on her own line of conduct. She took no notice of his agitation, lest she might attract the attention of the passers-by; and she feared that possibly the earl might mistrust them, if he should perceive wavering and uncertainty in those to whom he was confided. She therefore at once took him to some friends of her own, on whom she felt certain she might rely; and leaving him with them, immediately returned in search of Mr. Mills.

Meanwhile the Lady Nithsdale had in safety regained her lord's apartment. As she passed, all sympathised in her distress, and pitied her for the disappointment she had met with.

She closed the door, and then kept up a conversation as if her lord had been really present. She answered her own questions in his voice, as nearly as she could imitate it. She walked up and down the room, as though they had been conversing together, till at length she imagined the earl and Amy must have thoroughly cleared themselves of the guards.

During all this time she had not allowed herself once to pause or to reflect. She had contemplated nothing but success — she had not permitted herself to anticipate failure — she had not suffered her mind to glance towards the fatal morrow. Still calm and collected, she now calculated that she might with safety depart herself. She neglected no possible precaution: she opened the door, and standing half within it, so that those without might not have an opportunity of commanding a view of the interior, she bade her lord a formal farewell for the night, saying, "That something more than usual must have occurred to make Evans negligent on this important occasion, who had always been so punctual in the smallest trifles;" — she added, "there was no remedy; but that she should go in person; that if the Tower was still open when she had finished her business, she would return that night; but bade him be assured she would be with him as early in the morning as she could gain admittance, and, as she flattered herself, should bring him favourable news."

Then, before she shut the door, she pulled through the string of the latch, so that it could only be opened from within; she closed it with some force, to make sure that it was well fastened; and as she passed she told the servant he

need not carry candles to his master till his lord sent for them, as he desired to finish some prayers.

She descended the stairs. She found herself in the open air ; for a moment all seemed to reel around her ; she scarcely dared trust her senses that he was really free. She trembled as she passed on. She thought each sight, each sound, might be that he had been discovered, overtaken, and that they were now leading him back to captivity and certain death.

She feared to excite suspicion by looking too eagerly and curiously about her, and yet she fancied every moment she heard hurrying footsteps in pursuit of her. She reached the outer gates at last — she passed them ! There were several coaches on the stand : she called one, she threw herself into it, and drove to her own lodgings.

It was all true ! He was free ! She had saved him ! The joy seemed too great for endurance — her heart felt bursting ! But there was still much to be done, she must not yet relax.

CHAPTER XXIV.

And all extremes how link'd ! Do we not weep
For joy ? — and laugh, ay, laugh, for anguish ?
A hideous laugh, that tells of sorrow, more
Than tears and sighs !

MS. Play.

WHEN Lady Nithsdale arrived at her lodgings, she found poor Mr. M'Kenzie in waiting to accompany her to present her last hopeless petition, had the attempt, in the success of which she had so confidently, and, as it proved, so justly relied, proved ineffectual.

She told him, with exultation, there was no need now of any petition, as her husband was safe out of the Tower, and out of the hands of his enemies, as she supposed ; although, she added with truth, she knew not where he was.

It was also necessary to inform the Duchess of Buccleugh that she should not require her good offices that evening, but at the same time she was unwilling to spread the news of her lord's escape. She had discharged the coach which had conveyed her from the Tower ; but, sending for a sedan-chair,

she resolved to go immediately to the Duchess of Buccleugh's. She inquired if she was at home ; and being answered in the affirmative, and that she was in expectation of the countess's arrival, but was at that moment engaged with another duchess.* Lady Nithsdale declined going up stairs, but desired to be shown into a chamber below, begging at the same time that the duchess's maid might be sent to her.

She was glad to escape being questioned by the duchess herself, and bade the maid acquaint her grace that her only reason for not waiting upon her was her having been informed she was engaged with company. She charged the maid with her most sincere thanks for her grace's kind offer of accompanying her to court, but desired her to say, she might spare herself any further trouble, as it was judged more advisable to present one general petition in the name of all : still, she should never be unmindful of her particular obligation to her grace, which she hoped soon to acknowledge in person.

She had dismissed the chair which brought her to the Duchess of Buccleugh's, lest she should be pursued and watched ; and she therefore now desired one of the servants to call another, in which she proceeded to the Duchess of Montrose's.

Upon hearing of Lady Nithsdale's arrival, the duchess was seized with such a panic, — she so dreaded the notion of witnessing her despair, — that she suddenly quitted the apartment, and hastened to deny herself. Her husband, seeing her abruptly break from her company, anxiously followed to inquire the cause of her evident agitation.

“ I cannot see her,” she exclaimed : “ I could not bear to behold my poor cousin of Nithsdale's anguish. I have no power to save her, and I have not courage to contemplate the agony I cannot alleviate. Oh ! make some excuse for me ! I am weak and helpless ; I cannot preach resignation. Alas ! alas !” she continued, wringing her hands. “ I know too well what must be her feelings ; I am too well aware of what a nature is her devotion to her lord ; it would be mockery in me to bid her be patient, — to tell her time will temper her despair. I know it will not : I could but feed her grief ! It must be some stronger, firmer mind than mine that dare face such agony as hers !”

* These details are from Lady Nithsdale's letter.

Even while she spoke, the servants, who had not understood the order to deny their mistress, and who were accustomed at all hours to admit Lady Nithsdale, entered the apartment to inform her grace that the countess was below.

“What shall I do?” exclaimed the duchess, in dismay.

“Go to her, dear Christian,” answered the duke; “though you may not be able to inspire her with firmness to bear such affliction, your sympathy must soothe.”

“Oh, that is true! Yes, I will go to her, poor soul! Assuredly I would rather die than be unkind; and have I not promised she should always find a friend in Christian Montrose. But if you knew how fearful her grief is when she is so resolutely calm, you would not wonder that I shrink from seeing her under her present circumstances.”

The duchess slowly, hesitatingly, descended, and fearfully entered the apartment where Lady Nithsdale awaited her.

Instead of the harrowing image of despair, which the duchess had pictured to herself, she saw the countess with glowing cheeks and a countenance brilliant with joy, who rushed into her arms in her ecstasy of delight. The duchess stood appalled. She apprehended that her cousin’s troubles had, indeed, unsettled her reason, and that it was the light of madness which flashed from her eye. She shrank in fear and amazement.

“He is safe!” exclaimed the countess. “My husband is in freedom! — he is restored to me!”

“My gentle cousin, my sweet Winifred! — Alas! you are not well; be seated, and let me entreat you to compose yourself!”

“You do not rejoice with me!” she cried, seizing both the duchess’s hands. “Why do you not congratulate me? I am the happiest creature in the whole world!” she exclaimed, bursting into a flood of tears. The duchess’s alarm increased every moment. “I tell you, Christian, he is out of prison! — he has escaped them all! — he is, I trust, safe from all discovery. Oh! Heaven has been very merciful to me!” she continued, bowing her head with a meek fervour, which somewhat reassured her friend, and made her hope the countess’s words were not all the hallucinations of a maniac.

By degrees she became more composed, and gave some account of how her lord’s escape had been effected: then, in-

deed, did the duchess mingle tears of joy with hers, and smile to think how she had misconstrued her friend's expression of happiness.

When they had sufficiently recovered themselves to converse with some composure, the duchess informed Lady Nithsdale that the king was so much incensed against her for attempting to force her petition upon him, that she advised her to keep herself as closely concealed as possible. She told her she would herself go to court that evening, that she might the better judge how the intelligence of the Earl of Nithsdale's evasion was there received: and the friends once more parted.

The countess, as before, had discharged her chair, and now procured another, in which she proceeded to the house at which she had appointed to meet Amy Evans.

The duchess repaired to St. James's, where she found the king much irritated, and declaring that such a thing could not have been effected without a conspiracy: he that night despatched two persons to the Tower, to ascertain that the other prisoners were well secured: and on all sides the duchess heard different surmises as to the mode in which the earl's evasion could have been accomplished. Some threw the blame in one, some in another quarter, — none glanced at the true mode.

The duchess alone was acquainted with the countess's part in it; and if she had not still felt too deep an anxiety for the ultimate fate of such dear friends, she could almost have smiled at the confident assertions, the contradictory reports, the consequential hints, which were either loudly spoken or mysteriously whispered in all directions.

Indeed it has been a singular circumstance that an event of considerable importance, and one of such recent occurrence, should for many years have been enveloped in such mystery!

Meanwhile Lady Nithsdale had been the first to reach the appointed spot; but Amy Evans soon joined her. She told her how, after having placed the earl in temporary security, she had returned in search of Mr. Mills; how she had traced him to his own home, which he had regained when he recovered from his astonishment; and how they had then removed her lord to the house of a poor woman, directly opposite the guard-house. They imagined that, having changed the dis-

guise in which he had made his escape, all means of tracing him would become difficult ; and that the last place which would be searched would be one so near the Tower itself.

The poor woman had but a single small room to spare, up one pair of stairs, and which was almost destitute of furniture. Guided by Amy, the countess hastened to this humble abode, and there she had the inexpressible happiness of finding herself re-united to her husband.

There are moments of agony too intense to bear description ; there are also moments of bliss which baffle the power of language to paint. And if it is sometimes a relief to think the woes that excite our sympathies too acutely are fictitious woes, there ought to be pleasure in reflecting that the happiness which these two devoted spirits then enjoyed was real ; — that this is no fiction, but a plain and simple narrative of what has actually occurred.

CHAPTER XXV.

But I, that knew what harbour'd in that head,
What virtues rare were temper'd in that breast,
Honour the place that such a jewel bred,
And kiss the ground whereas the corpse doth rest !
Lord Surrey on the Death of Sir Thomas Wyatt.

WHEN Lady Nithsdale, after all the varied sufferings of many weeks, the painful excitement of the few preceding days, the agonising violence she had done to her feelings for the last twelve hours, at length found herself pressed to her husband's bosom, when she knew that she was supported by his arms, over-wrought nature gave way, and she fainted.

With the assistance of Amy, however, she soon revived, and in a state of blissful exhaustion she wept freely on his shoulder. Few words were spoken.

When her lady seemed more composed, Amy stole away, for she feared to excite the notice of the other lodgers.

" Let us pray, my love ! " said Lady Nithsdale when the door was closed : " let us together pour forth our souls to that Providence who has this day extended over us so special a mercy. It will relieve my bursting soul to give utterance to the gratitude which almost oppresses it ; " and they both sunk on their knees in humble adoration.

For a time, nor doubt nor fear disturbed the full security of their gratitude and their joy ! It was not till the first grey light began to dawn, and that the twitter of the sparrows on the house-tops, and the discordant sounds of London streets, again broke the stillness which had reigned, that the difficulties and dangers that still surrounded them recurred to their minds.

The earl sighed when first he saw the rays of the sun shine on the taller chimneys of the adjacent buildings, and that the tiled roofs of the surrounding houses became visible from their narrow window, for he remembered his own feelings as he had mentally bidden adieu the preceding evening to the sunbeams ; and, mixed with gratulation and thankfulness for the different circumstances under which he now hailed the cheering light, came the recollection of his fellow-prisoners. He thought on the good Earl of Derwentwater, and on his old friend Lord Kenmure.

His wife watched the expression of his countenance. She read what passed within. " Alas ! " she said, " I have been a very egotist in my joy. I have not been able to think of those who are now marking in agony and desperation the dawning of this fatal day, who turn from its glorious light in sickening, loathing despair. Alas for them ! The extremes of grief, and of happiness, both make us selfish creatures. And yet can I really think of aught but you ? How can I grieve, when I can gaze as now upon you, rescued from that dismal place, restored to me and to your children ? Oh ! we shall together hear their clear young voices ; we shall together, with delighted eyes, follow them in their graceful sports ; we shall both feel their twining arms around our necks ; we shall together guide and direct their young minds ; we shall watch the opening intellect develope itself, and ripen into all that is noble in man, all that is lovely in woman ! Oh, my love ! my husband ! what happiness is there in store for us ! "

Lord Nithsdale listened in deep-felt rapture : he hung upon her words ; he let his soul go to the delightful picture she drew ; he drank in the musical sounds of her soft voice ; he looked with love and tenderness upon the sweet though wan countenance, which, in its delicate paleness, bore the traces of past suffering.

" What happiness indeed ! " he echoed. " What unutterable happiness ! "

“And how tall our noble boy will be! We shall scarcely know him, except by those clustering fair curls which contrast so prettily with the dark brows, which are all your own, my love! Oh, those blue eyes! how they used to dance from beneath the shady brow! And Anne, my darling Annie! she will not have forgotten us, I trust; she will not have forgotten to climb your knee, and nestle into your bosom, as she was used to do, while you still remained absorbed in meditation.”

A smile, a pleased, a tranquil, tender smile, played over his lips as he said, “My own sweet children, I dare think of you now! Yesterday it was with such painful regret that the image of your innocent endearments rose before my mind, that I strove to banish you from my thoughts. My gallant, stout boy! my pretty Annie!” and a silent but sweet tear stole down his manly cheek. “And yet, my love, are we not almost presumptuous in looking forward thus confidently? Though no longer within a prison’s walls, we must not deem ourselves too secure ——”

As he spoke, one loud, deep, sonorous toll of a bell was heard. Lady Nithsdale started. The colour, which the joyous picture she had drawn had summoned to her cheeks, gave way to a ghastly paleness. Lord Nithsdale did not finish the broken sentence: both sat in mute horror. Several moments elapsed; they heard no more. They began to fancy some accidental sound had startled them, when again the clear, deep sound struck on their ears—their hearts! She looked upon him with a fearful inquiring glance.

“It must be so,” he said; “this is the very hour!” He clasped his hands firmly together; and, dropping his head, he pressed them against his bosom. “My friends, my noble, my true-hearted friends!” he ejaculated in a low and smothered voice.

“O God! and is it over?” she exclaimed, and she wound her arms around him; she clung to him with desperate energy; she pressed him closely to her, while she gazed wildly at the closed door, as if she every moment expected to see it burst open, and the ministers of the law rush in to bereave her of the loved being she had rescued.

“They shall not tear thee from me! No, no! I feel this woman’s arm could hold thee with so firm a grasp, that no

earthly power could sever us. They shall not, they cannot wrest thee from these arms !”

Again the awful toll of the minute-bell rung upon their ears ! “ Does it mean all is over ? ” she again slowly whispered in trembling horror.

“ No, no ! not so ! they are even now on their way to the scaffold,” he said. “ He breathes yet ! my friend, my noble Derwentwater yet breathes this vital air ! The healthful blood still flows through his veins ! That gallant heart still throbs in its mortal clothing ! He is yet alive ; and on this vast globe there does not beat a heart more gallant,—a spirit more undaunted dwells not on this earth !”

Again that toll struck on their hearts,—that toll for which they listened, till they almost fancied each must have been the last ; when, no ! the next awful sound struck their very frame, jarred on their every nerve, even more painfully than that which preceded it. They were half tempted to stop their ears to exclude the torturing clang, but a power which they could not resist compelled them to listen with redoubled intensity.

“ By this time they must have reached Tower Hill ! ” he murmured. If he had seen the fearful expression of her countenance while he thus pictured what would have been, what still might be, his fate, he would in pity have been silent ; but his thoughts were at that moment all upon his friends, his companions, his fellow-prisoners. Though he pressed her to his heart, he looked not upon her, and was still absorbed by the scene which he knew was enacting.

“ Hush ! all is silent ! the bell has ceased ! ” No : it came again ! its brazen clang again sounded. They still listened in breathless silence ! At length it really ceased.

“ What means this stillness ? ” she faintly asked.

“ It is even now,” he replied, in a smothered tone, “ they must have reached the spot ! ” He pressed his hand upon his eyes : “ My friends ! my friends !—my dear, my noble friends !—I should not have abandoned ye ; I should be there to share your fate ; I ought to be with ye now ! ” he exclaimed in passion.

“ My husband ! my life ! my love ? ” she softly whispered, in an appealing, a deprecating tone.

“ Oh ! no, no ! I did not mean to say so ! This is my

home ! here is my resting-place !” and his head dropped upon her shoulder.

Minutes elapsed : neither could keep count of time ; it might be moments, it might be hours !

Again the awful, the horrible bell resounded ; it seemed to crack his heart-strings. He started up ; he shook her from him : he paced the room with hasty strides.

“ It is all over !” he exclaimed, — “ it is consummated ! They are now bloody corpses ! headless trunks !”

She seized him by the arm : “ Hush, hush ; in mercy hush ! speak not with such ungoverned earnestness. Did not Amy forbid us to stir for our lives ? — did she not bid us converse in subdued tones ? — did she not bid us avoid every movement that might betray that this apartment was occupied ? Are there not other lodgers in the house ? If you do not value life yourself, take pity on me. Spare me ! oh, spare me the horrors you have just brought so vividly before me ! Be still, I implore, I command, — by all I have done, all I have ventured, all I have endured !” and she dragged him to the wretched bed on which they had been seated, and which was the only article of furniture the chamber contained. He unresistingly yielded to her gentle force, and re-seated himself.

The dreadful certainty that the fate of his companions in misfortune was sealed completely dispelled the gleam of secure happiness which had shone through the hearts of both.

Lady Nithsdale thought on the Countess of Derwentwater ; on the Lady Kenmure ; and while she closely clung to her husband’s arm, to assure herself in very truth that he was safe, and to prevent his making any movement which might betray him, she pictured to herself the unavailing agonies of the other ladies, till her very brain went round !

It now seemed to her she had as yet accomplished but little. She felt there was no security in their freedom ; the fact that they were still within so short a distance of the fatal spot, which had this moment been brought only too forcibly home to the feelings of both, made her impatiently await further intelligence from her faithful friends — made her feel that nought was done till the seas rolled between him and his enemies !

She listened breathlessly, hoping each step might be Amy’s, or Mrs. Mills’s ; and yet she dreaded each sound that reached her, lest it might prove the approach of guards, who, having

traced his steps, might have succeeded in discovering his retreat.

Lord Nithsdale, on the other hand, thought not of himself ; his feelings were all for the departed. His imagination rapidly ran over his former intercourse with his friend.

“ I never saw him from that day,” he murmured thoughtfully ; “ we parted at the second gateway when we returned from Westminster Hall, on the 9th. As we were in the coach, on our way home, he regretted having pleaded guilty ; ‘ for,’ he said, ‘ it is not treason that we have committed ! it would have been treason in us to have acted otherwise than we have done. Yes,’ he continued ; ‘ all, save the prisoners, all the multitudes who crowded the vast Hall — all, all were traitors, except ourselves !’ And when I urged that the expression thus used was but the form in which we conveyed that we denied not our share in the business, ‘ But I am not a traitor to my lawful king, and I should not have allowed the word,’ he replied with earnestness. We were then led from the coach to our separate lodgings,” continued the earl, following the current of his own melancholy thoughts, “ and as we parted, — for the last time parted, — he pressed my hand, and said, ‘ Nithsdale, we have been friends through life, should we be parted in death ? (which I do not think we shall be, we shall probably share the same doom !) but should one survive, let me live in your remembrance. as, I promise, you shall in mine !’ And so he shall ! never, never will I forget you, my noble Ratcliffe ; here shall your memory dwell,” he added, striking his bosom, — “ here, while the life-blood throbs through this heart !”

He paused, and Lady Nithsdale for a while feared to disturb the sad recollections in which he so naturally indulged ; but at length she gently ventured to whisper : —

“ And if you thus feel for him who was your friend, think what would have been my condition had the husband of my love shared his fate ! Control your voice ! Speak but in whispers. Think should you now be dragged from me !” she continued in a meek and supplicating tone.

“ True, true, my gentle love !” he softly answered. “ I will be prudent, — calm and prudent ; I owe it in gratitude to my deliverer.”

She had scarcely thus tempered down his emotions, when

they were both startled by the sound of footsteps ; but they were soft and stealthy. There was no heavy tramp, no sound of arms, no rough voices.

There came three gentle taps upon the door ; Lady Nithsdale hastened to it ; Amy gave the preconcerted sign, and she admitted her.

Her face was pale, almost livid ; her eyes seemed starting from her head ; she staggered into the room, but she failed not carefully to close and double-lock the door behind her.

“ I came to tell you all that we have arranged,” she said, in a broken voice ; “ and —— I will speak in a moment . . . ”

“ Oh, merciful Heaven ! Do they suspect ? Have they traced him ? ” cried Lady Nithsdale, in tremulous agony.

“ Oh, no ! it is not that : my dear lord is safe, — I trust, — I hope ; safe from that dreadful doom ! ” and Amy closed her eyes for a moment.

“ For pity’s sake explain yourself, — dear, dear Amy ! ”

“ ’Tis nothing, — it will pass. ’Tis nothing more than we all know. We knew this was the fatal morning ; and I waited till all was over, for I dared not willingly risk seeing anything dreadful. I thought I might now venture here, for Mr. Mills, who was there, told me all was accomplished. I came to tell you we have hopes for my lord’s speedy departure. But oh ! I did not wait long enough ! The scaffold is still up,” she continued, shuddering at the recollection, “ all hung with black cloth ; and the block, the huge — bloody — wooden block, — and the saw-dust ! Oh ! my soul sickens ! ”

Deep as was her anxiety for her lord’s escape, the countess herself could not command words to inquire what were the hopes of accomplishing it, to which Amy alluded. All remained for some moments speechless, with eyes fixed on the ground, fearful to meet those of the other.

At length Lady Nithsdale stole a glance towards her husband to see how he bore what Amy had just uttered. His face was concealed by both his hands.

Amy was the first to recover herself : “ The Venetian ambassador sends his coach next week to meet his brother at Dover ; and we hope to persuade his excellency’s servant, M. Michel, to take charge of my lord. He is one on whom we may depend. He is under great obligations to Mr. and Mrs. Mills, and would do anything to repay them ; and when once

he is safe away, he is not responsible to those in power here. Yes, dearest madam, I have good hope that all will turn out right," continued Amy, striving to shake off the horror which had overpowered her when first she entered.

"Thanks, my faithful, true friend!" and Lady Nithsdale tenderly embraced her.

Lord Nithsdale appeared not to heed what they had said; but, in a low, hollow voice, inquired, with his face averted, — for he shrunk from showing to any eye but his own Winifred's, the traces of deep emotion which he could not master, — "Did Mr. Mills mention any particulars?"

"Nothing very particular," answered Amy, shuddering at the question.

"Did the lords address the people?" he again asked, his face still averted, and with a forced calmness in his tone.

"I believe they did, my lord."

"Was Mr. Mills within hearing?"

"Yes, my dear master; but why harrow your feelings by listening to these details? Surely it were better to think of the future, and bend your mind to all that there remains to do?"

"Nay, I must hear; I must learn all I can of my lost, lost friends!" he exclaimed, turning upon them a face so awful in its noble grief that none dared for a moment to resist his wishes. "Tell me all; let me hear everything!"

Unable to oppose, or to resist, his firm and solemn command, Amy began her tale: "They were taken, my lord, in a hackney-coach from the Tower to the Transport Office. It was a little before ten o'clock."

"I know it," he answered. "We heard the bell!" he added in a sepulchral inward voice.

"The Earl of Derwentwater was the first; and though he seemed somewhat pale, his bearing was resolute and sedate, Mr. Mills said."

"Assuredly it was!" said the earl, almost angry that it should be deemed possible his friend could have borne himself otherwise.

"After some time spent in prayer he obtained the sheriff's leave to read a paper. He came forward to the rails, and he asked pardon of those whom he might have scandalized by pleading guilty at his trial."

"I knew that weighed upon his mind," murmured the earl.

“He said he was sensible he had by this made bold with his loyalty to King James ; but that he had been told it was merely a form, and that there was nothing of moment in so doing.”

“They told us all so ; — that, having been undeniably in arms, pleading guilty was but the consequence of submitting to mercy.”

“He said he died a Roman Catholic, and was in perfect charity with all the world ; and he added, that if the prince, who now governs, had spared his life, he should have thought himself obliged never more to take up arms against him.” Amy was silent. Lord Nithsdale, after a pause of some moments, said, in a voice scarcely audible,

“Did he suffer ? Was it quickly over ? ”

“At one blow, my lord,” answered Amy, shuddering as she spoke.

“Pardon me, good Amy, — I pain you ; but I must know. And Lord Kenmure ? ”

“He did not speak to the people ; but in his devotions he prayed for King James. He apologised for his dress ; saying, he had so little thought of dying so soon, he had not provided a black suit. Mr. Mills says he showed great resolution and firmness in his carriage, though, to his mind, he was not so calm within as the Earl of Derwentwater.”

“I can endure no more ! ” at length exclaimed Lady Nithsdale, as all these details so horribly pictured the scene : “I cannot, cannot bear it ! Amy, in mercy cease ! ”

“I crave your pardon, dearest wife ; but they were my friends — my best friends, — and they are gone ! But we will hear no more ! ” And he again buried his face in his hands.

Amy told her lady that Mrs. Mills would soon be with them, and bring the answer of M. Michel. She was even now at the Venetian ambassador's, and hoped to have arranged everything according to their wishes.

The countess pressed Amy's hand, and they silently awaited Mrs. Mills's coming.

It was late before she arrived ; but she told them that on the following day, the Saturday, Lord Nithsdale might remove to the ambassador's, where M. Michel undertook to conceal him in his own chamber ; that on the Wednesday in the following

week, his excellency's coach-and-six was to go to Dover to meet his brother, when M. Michel could easily take Lord Nithsdale in his master's livery as one of his retinue.

All seemed to promise well, and the countess breathed more freely.

Mrs. Mills had considerably brought with her some bread, which, with a loaf and a bottle of wine which had been provided the evening before, was all they had to subsist upon for the two days and nights they spent in their present lurking-place.

On the Saturday they parted, according to this arrangement. To both, such a parting was a severe trial!

The countess feared every possible and every impossible danger must beset his path when she could no longer see him with her own eyes. He found the task a hard one to tear himself again from her, when so lately reunited; but he also felt how incumbent it was on him to accept with gratitude so favourable an opportunity of escaping. They were both aware that to linger in England was risking all their hard-earned happiness. In trembling hope, they parted.

"It would be sinful in us to mistrust Providence," he said; "we have been so mercifully dealt with, we ought to feel confidence that we shall be preserved to a safe and joyful meeting!"

"True, true, my love. I would not detain you one moment in this fatal land! I wish you gone! And yet — and yet — it is so painful, so very painful, to part! But you shall go — even now, — this moment! It is not for me to doubt the mercy of Heaven."

She gently disengaged herself from him: he pressed her once more to his bosom, and then followed Mrs. Mills to the door. He there paused to take one more look at her as she stood half supported by Amy. She watched him through the door-way, — she listened to his step as he descended the stairs, — she heard the street-door shut: — "He is gone!" she said; "but I must not repine. Oh, what a parting it might have been! When I think of Lady Derwentwater and of Lady Kenmure, I feel how blessed I am! I will not weep — I will not grieve: I must allow no feeling but that of gratitude to find a place within this bosom!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

La nef qui déjoint mes amours
N'a cy de moi que la moitié.
Une parte te reste, elle est tienne.

Mary Queen of Scots.

THE Countess of Nithsdale lost no time in quitting her present retreat, and she took up her abode at the house of a quiet honest man in Drury Lane, where, in the utmost privacy, she awaited the news of her husband's safe arrival on the Continent.

After the intense agitation of the foregoing week, she experienced a kind of listless stupefaction ; she was totally incapable of employing herself. Although her mind was comparatively at ease, yet a thousand vague horrors shot across it. The inaction was oppressive and irksome to her. She wished every hour, every moment, to know how it fared with her lord ; and yet she was fully aware that the only prudent course to pursue, both for his sake and her own, was to keep herself quite retired, and to avoid being seen by any.

On the Wednesday the Earl of Nithsdale, as had been previously concerted, accompanied the Venetian ambassador's coach to Dover, where he arrived without detection or danger.

When there, M. Michel hired a small vessel, and immediately set sail for Calais.

Was it a moment of unmixed joy to Lord Nithsdale when he set foot upon the vessel which was to bear him from the land in which his life was forfeited to the laws, — from the land in which he was proscribed, to seek one which held out to him all the charms of life and liberty ?

It was not so : — for that land was the land of his birth, — that land contained her to whom he was bound by stronger ties than ever attached man to woman !”

As the swift bark bounded over the deep, he gazed upon the receding shores with tenderness and regret. The breeze was favourable, the ship skimmed the waters, the passage was performed in so short a time that the captain remarked, “ the wind could not have served better if his passengers had been flying for their lives.”

Until the countess received assured intelligence of his safe

arrival at Calais, she had been able to turn her thoughts to no other subject. She felt he might at any moment be discovered; it was still possible that all the horrors and the sufferings with which she was only too well acquainted might still be in store for her. At moments she accused herself of wanting that reliance she ought to feel in Heaven; at others, she thought she was presumptuous in fancying herself too secure.

But when once she knew he was safe from all pursuit, other cares beset her mind.

The feelings of the mother rose strong within her. Every paper, every document, which might secure to themselves, or to their children after them, any means of existence, had been left at Terreagles. While fearing for his life, all other considerations had been forgotten; but now that all-absorbing interest was at rest, anxiety for the fate of her children took possession of her soul.

She resolved, if possible, to revisit Terreagles. If she had exposed her life for the father, she thought she could do no less than hazard it once more to save her son from beggary.

After the great events of the last month, her mind seemed to stand in need of some strong excitement; she was almost glad to feel called upon by duty for a fresh exertion.

She hoped, through the means of the Duchess of Buccleugh, she might obtain leave openly to visit Terreagles; and she wrote to her, telling her that she understood some suspected her of having contrived her lord's escape, but that she imagined a bare suspicion, destitute of proof, would never be held sufficient ground for her being punished for a supposed offence, although it had been motive enough for her to remain in concealment. She entreated her grace to procure permission for her to depart freely upon her business.

But her application, far from being granted, rather roused in the government the desire to secure her; and she owed to the Solicitor-General (who, though an utter stranger to her, had the humanity to plead her cause,) the decision, that as long as she evinced such respect to government as not to appear in public, no search should be made for her; but that, if she showed herself in England or in Scotland, she should be forthwith secured.

This was but poor satisfaction. Having been so suddenly summoned from Scotland, she had not been able to arrange

any thing at Terreagles ; but before she repaired to Scone to wait upon the Chevalier, not knowing in such uncertain times what might occur during her absence, she had taken the precaution of burying in the ground the family papers, which her husband had committed to her charge, and other articles of most value.

It was fortunate she had done so, for the house had been searched after her departure ; and, as the countess herself expresses it, " God only knows what might have transpired from those papers ! "

If these documents were to be preserved, it seemed absolutely necessary she should repair to Terreagles, and that she should do so without delay, and as privately as possible.

For this purpose she again provided herself, Amy and Walter Elliot, with saddle-horses, and retraced her way to Scotland.

It was no longer the inclemency of the season which constituted the danger of the journey, but the fear of being discovered. On this occasion, however, it was but for herself she feared : after her long seclusion in the most confined parts of London, as she rode forward, inhaling the clear country air, with the delightful certainty that her husband was in safety and in freedom, instead of being a prisoner, in danger, distress, and loneliness, within the Tower walls, she contrasted the buoyant spirit with which she looked upon this merely personal risk, with the horrible oppressive weight which lay at her bosom as, two months before, she had traversed the same road.

Her spirits almost rose with the danger ; and she gladly yielded herself up to the enjoyment of the early spring.

The hedges were already beginning to be partially clothed in their green livery ; the meadows in the neighbourhood of London were fresh and bright ; the birds twittered, and sprang from twig to twig ; the primroses and wild violets already peeped forth on the more sunny banks. The unusually hard winter had been followed by the rapid bursting forth, the flush, of an early spring. As she advanced, the new-cut copses were spangled with wood anemones and the blue harebell ; cowslips and daffodils painted the fields. All nature seemed to smile before her. Her journey was one of positive enjoyment, notwithstanding the degree of fear which induced her prudently to avoid the large towns, and the considerable

inns, at which she was likely to be known, and to put up only at the smallest and humblest resting-places.

To Amy, the naturally light-hearted Amy, the joyous laugh was no longer a stranger. Her eye danced once more with gaiety, and she even occasionally trilled a snatch of one of her old Welsh ditties.

Her lady smiled kindly upon her: "I scarcely thought ever to have heard that sound again, Amy. It does me good to hear it; and yet," she said, "there is much pain mingled with the pleasure it affords. It brings back with overwhelming tenderness past days of happiness;—past, never to return!" and her eyes filled with tears.

"My dearest madam, I could chide myself for my silly song if it makes you weep."

"No, dear Amy, sing on. I love to hear the melody, although it draws tears: they are not bitter ones."

"Nay, madam, I can sing no more; my voice is gone:" and they rode on in silence.

After several more days of continued journeying, Lady Nithsdale ventured to repose herself for two nights at Traquhair; where, with her sister-in-law, and Lord Traquhair, she enjoyed the happiness of a free outpouring of the soul, and where, to willing ears and open hearts, she gave every detail of their brother's escape.

The lieutenant of the county being an old and tried friend of her lord's, she felt assured that he would allow no search to be made for her without forwarding to her due warning to abscond.

She did not send any notice of her return to Terreagles, that the magistrates of Dumfries might not be prepared to make inquiries about her; but she suddenly made her appearance there, feigning that she had the leave of government to do so. The better to persuade them that it was with permission she was there, she sent to her neighbours and invited them to visit her; while in the interim she busied herself in securing the papers.

The gardener alone knew where they had been buried, and with the assistance of the faithful old Hugh she recovered them. They were as yet unhurt; but, although in the highest state of preservation after one very severe winter, they could not have remained much longer in the ground without prejudice.

It was, as Lady Nithsdale herself says, a particular stroke of Providence that she made the despatch she did, for the magistrates of Dumfries soon suspected her.

The indefatigable Amy, whose ears were always open, whose discretion was never slumbering, learned by a fortunate accident that one of them was heard to say, he should, the next day, insist upon seeing the Countess of Nithsdale's leave from government.

There was not a moment to be lost : Lady Nithsdale resolved to depart before daybreak. She forwarded the rescued documents by a safe hand to Traquhair, and on the following morning set forth again for London.

It was now that she bade a fond, lingering, last adieu to her home : she knew that it was for ever she quitted it ! When all were at rest, she gently visited each well-known apartment. She repaired to that which her children had usually inhabited : she looked with sadness upon the vacant room. She thought how often she had there heard their prattling voices — there bent over their quiet slumbers. She paused at the door, and the tears gushed from her eyes. A thousand trifling incidents crowded on her mind : there was not a spot that was not alive with recollections.

"Truly," she thought, "did my dear lord say, as he parted hence, 'Our castles will be desolate, our name extinct !'" She looked upon the motto, 'Reviresco : ' "Truly did he say, 'Not here will any Earl of Nithsdale flourish again !' — but he is safe ; our children are safe ; and we shall be happy, in all the charities of domestic life. 'Twere sinful to allow such regrets to stifle for a moment the gratitude which ought to overpower all other emotions."

But when, ere the early dawn appeared, they prepared to mount their horses, and she saw the faithful old gardener, with his blue bonnet in his hand, respectfully hold the bridle rein, enacting the part of 'squire, the tears would flow unbidden : "Thanks, my good Hugh ! I am glad to see you once more ; for, alas ! Hugh, I shall never, never, return to this dear home again ! Heaven bless you, and all, all, who dwell around !" she continued, looking around her at the scattered cottages on the hill-sides ; "may you and yours be well and happy !"

"I feared how it was, my leddy ; I fancied, if I was not

here betimes, I should never look on your leddyship's fair face again. Eh! madam, 'tis an awful thing when the head of an ancient house flits for ever from the home of his ancestors. 'Tis an awsome thing for a' the puir folks about! and as for me and my gude wife, why, I think it will go nigh to break our hearts! But that's neither here nor there: what maun be, maun be; and I dinna' mean to make your leddyship downhearted! I only thought I would see the last o' ye;" and the old man brushed away a tear. "I just made bold, my leddy, to bring wi' me a little o' the seed of our famous kale, which my lord used always to praise. I thought, in the outlandish countries my lord is like to abide in now, he might not meet with any such; and I guessed 'twas next to impossible that, with so much upon your mind, your leddyship should give it a thought."

"Give it me, good Hugh; and depend upon it your kind recollection of my lord shall not be forgotten. I will tell him that his old friends here have not put him from their minds yet!"

"Nor ever will, my leddy; that's not the way with a true Scot. We shall keep the Maxwells in mind as long as you and yours remember Scotland, and, may be, longer too. But yonder's the grey light in the east; I must not be keeping your leddyship."

Lady Nithsdale could not speak; but she pressed the old man's hard weather-beaten hand in her own soft delicate fingers, and she hurried from the castle. It was in vain to struggle longer with her tears; she yielded to the natural impulse, and suffered them to flow.

As on their former journey, they only stopped at the poorest inns; and at one of these they were compelled to take their evening meal in the room where the other travellers were also accommodated. They remarked a sturdy farmer who looked hard at them, and by the blaze of the fire they recognised the yeoman with whom they had conversed on their way to York. He soon renewed acquaintance.

"Why, is it you, my demure puritan? What brings you this road again so soon? Did you not find a hearty welcome, that you are so soon for the north country again? How fared it with your friends in London?"

"It fares well with some of our dearest friends, I thank

you ; far better than when last we met," answered the countess.

"There have been great doings going on in London since you went this road ; and what my companion said, though it was roughly said, has come out pretty true : they have made away with a good many of the rebel lords."

Lady Nithsdale shuddered.

"But the king did spare some of them, and they say would have spared more if his ministers would have let him ; but a good many took French leave. There was half a dozen broke out of Newgate at once, they say ; and though some were taken again, there was one Hepburn found out where his wife and children were abiding, by spying his own family tankard, the Keith tankard, as they call it, which they had stuck in the window just for that very purpose : he was a lucky fellow ! And Forster, he is safe in France, they say. And pray, young woman, you can't tell me how 'twas the Earl of Nithsdale got away ?"

Lady Nithsdale started. "Nay, sir ! how should I know ?"

"Why, you have been in London, and I thought folks must have talked enough about it there ; for, to my mind, 'twas a strange thing, and that's the truth. Do you think the guards were in the secret ?"

"Oh, no, no ! they knew nothing !" exclaimed the countess, anxious to exculpate them from such a charge.

"Why, I thought you knew nothing !" answered the yeoman, with a cunning glance ; "but if you do, you need not stand in fear of me ; I should never wish to say anything of anybody to their prejudice."

"I never heard any suspicion of infidelity thrown out against the guards," answered Lady Nithsdale, in a more composed manner ; "but I have left London some time, and other circumstances may have transpired."

"Then you don't know that 'twas the earl's mother that brought him the clothes in which he disguised himself ?"

"No ! indeed I did not," answered the countess, with a glance at Amy, which she could not control.

"They say that's a positive fact !" proceeded the farmer : "and perhaps, then, you have not heard, what they tell me is equally true, that on the 24th, — yes, it was the 24th, was it not, that the rebels had their heads off ?"

Lady Nithsdale bowed assent.

“On the 24th of last month, the very day the Earl of Derwentwater was beheaded, the water in the moat round Dillstone Castle turned as red as blood ! That was very singular, was it not ? ”

“ Strange indeed ! ” ejaculated Amy, with a countenance in which awe and wonder were honestly visible ; “ on the very day he suffered ! ” — and the thought of the scaffold, and the blood, of which she had caught, or fancied she caught, a sight, flashed across her mind. She turned so pale, that the countess, now the most self-possessed of the two, hastened to withdraw attention from Amy, lest her emotion should become too apparent.

The feminine horror of blood, and the superstitious terror with which she listened to so unnatural a portent, had thrown her more off her guard than circumstances of real peril would have done.

Lady Nithsdale inquired whether the Earl of Wintoun’s trial had yet come on, and the yeoman, proud of his superior information, told her that it had, and that he had received sentence of death ; but he added, “ he seemed so wild and strange that half the world thought he was not in his right senses.”

Meanwhile Amy Evans had recovered herself, and the countess was glad to seize the first opportunity of retiring, and of avoiding any further observation.

Upon her arrival in London, she found from her friends, the Duchess of Montrose and Mrs. Morgan, that the king was even more than ever incensed against her, for having, against his prohibition, made her appearance in Scotland ; and that if he should succeed in securing her, there was every reason to fear that she would be proceeded against according to the utmost rigour of the law. And this, she heard from some of the best law authorities, would be no other than, in a case of high treason, to make the head of the wife answerable for that of the husband.

It therefore became necessary that she should take measures for her own speedy departure. But, before she left her native land for ever, she ventured to have one more interview with her good cousin, Christian of Montrose. It was, however, by stealth that the duchess visited her, and in sorrow that she bade her farewell.

“ I fear to injure you by my visit, dear cousin,” she said ; “ and yet I longed to bid Heaven prosper you on your journey. You will let me know when you are really restored to your husband and your children. Though we may never meet again, it will be sweet to me to fancy you enjoying perfect happiness with those who are so dear to you.”

“ I shall indeed be happy ; but, alas ! dear Christian, this heart will ever yearn towards its island home. I love the very soil of England ; and, as I pass along, I look with fond regret at every house, at every tree, and think with sorrow that I am henceforth to be an exile ; that I can never, never, look on them again. As for my friends—such friends as you, dear Christian ! ——But think you in very truth there is no hope of our being ever allowed to revisit our dear England ? ”

“ Alas ! the king is still so angry with you individually. He has granted the Viscountess Kenmure 150*l.* per annum for the education of her children ; the Lady Nairne too has met with favour ; but, dear cousin,” she added, smiling, “ he says you have given him more trouble than any other woman in Europe ; and although I verily believe many of the other prisoners who have made their escape have not been over-strictly guarded, yet both the warders who had charge of the earl your husband, and only they, are likely to be punished for neglect of their duty.”

“ They deserve no punishment on that score,” replied the countess. “ Neither do I owe them gratitude, nor need the government visit upon them the good deed in which they did not participate.”

“ But from all I tell you, dearest Winifred, it is plain you should not linger here ! ”

“ I shall be gone to-morrow, Heaven favouring me,” replied the countess. “ This evening I bid farewell to two dear friends, and to-morrow I am gone ! ” And with many tears, and last farewells, and promises of communicating by letter, the cousins parted.

The friends to whom Lady Nithsdale alluded were Mrs. Morgan and Mrs. Mills, whose names she did not care to mention even to the duchess, lest it might ever transpire that they had assisted in her lord's escape.

To them she scarcely knew in what terms sufficiently to express her gratitude ; and it cast a gloom over the prospect

of speedy reunion to the objects of her dearest affections, to think that she should never more see the persons to whom, under Providence, she was indebted for that happy prospect.

CHAPTER XXVII.

But I wad rather see him roam
An outcast on a foreign strand,
And wi' his master beg his bread,
Nae mair to see his native land,
Than bow a hair o' his brave head
To base usurper's tyrannye,
Than cringe for mercy to a knave
That ne'er was owned by him or me.

Jacobite Song.

LADY NITHSDALE'S voyage was performed in safety ; and at Paris she joined her husband and her children, whom he had conveyed thither from Bruges to await her coming.

The happiness which they had almost feared to picture was at length realised. They together gazed upon their noble boy ; —she saw the little Lady Anne nestled in her father's bosom, —she gave herself up to the joy of gazing on them, with no fear that this joy should be snatched from her by any power except the immediate will of Heaven.

On the 4th of May they reached Avignon, where all his adherents flocked around the Pretender, —the Earl, or, as he was there styled, the Duke of Mar, the Duke of Ormond, and many others, to the number of thirty lords.

But the petty broils, the dissensions, and the jealousies of this mock court assorted but ill with the feelings and habits of Lord and Lady Nithsdale. They soon left Avignon, and proceeded to Italy, where they lived in privacy, with no wish beyond each other's society and the company of their children.

After all which they had endured, it was enough to be together ; and for weeks, nay, months, the delightful certainty of being restored to each other, stood in lieu of all things else.

But human nature is so constituted that the continued possession of that which we have long enjoyed, and that which we no longer fear to lose, will not alone be productive of lively, positive happiness ; other thoughts, other desires, find room within the heart.

As their children advanced in years, they could not but feel that they were doomed to vegetate in a foreign soil, — they could not but feel that their position in life was very different from that to which they had been born.

The remembrance of home, the images of absent friends, the memory of departed ones, were treasured up in their minds : and Lady Nithsdale would, unperceived, dwell on the pale sad brow of her lord as, hanging on his arm, she paced with him the shores of the Mediterranean ; and she could easily read that his thoughts had leaped over intervening time and space, over years gone by, and over the mountains, plains, and seas that interposed between them and their home, and were sadly fixed upon the past, and the distant. He caught her eye, as tearfully, fondly, it was turned on him.

“ Yes,” he said, “ my thoughts were far from hence. The clear pure heaven above us is unbroken by a cloud, but dearer to my eyes the misty sky of Scotland ; the deep blue of the unruffled sea is beautiful, but to my feelings the dusky waves that dash against the ruined walls of our own Caerlaverock are more sublime in their wild grandeur. The distinct, defined outline of yon purple mountains may be more brilliant, but my heart yearns for the softened hazy outline of our own Scotch hills, melting into the pearly hues of our watery sky ! ”

As he spoke, a light bark glided rapidly by, and the boatmen kept time with their oars as they chanted, in their musical tongue, Italian poetry to Italian melody.

“ And dearer to my ears,” said Lady Nithsdale, “ the simple ballad of a Scottish maiden, than even these sweet sounds as they are wafted to us over the waters ! ”

They stopped to listen to the song as it died away ; and, as they listened, another and more awful sound struck upon their ears.

The bell of one of the small chapels, often constructed on the shores of Catholic countries, was tolled for the soul of a departed mariner. As it happened, the tone was not unlike one of which they both retained only too vivid and painful a recollection.

The countess felt her husband's frame quiver beneath the stroke. There was no need of words. With a mutual pressure of the arm, they returned upon their steps and sought their home.

Unconsciously their pace quickened. They seemed to fly before the stroke of that bell! Such suffering as they had both experienced leaves traces in the soul which time itself can never wholly efface.

To those who may have been interested in the fate of the two persons who form the subject of the foregoing memoir, it may be satisfactory to know, that the Lady Nithsdale was not parted by death from her beloved husband till many years afterwards, when, in the year 1744, he died, in his exile, at Rome. She survived him five years: but she had the comfort of knowing that, by her exertions in her last visit to Terreagles, she had succeeded in securing a competency to her son, who married his cousin the Lady Catherine Stewart, daughter to the Earl and Countess of Traquhair. Her daughter, the Lady Anne Maxwell, became the wife of Lord Bellew.

THE HAMPSHIRE COTTAGE.

CHAPTER I.

And still it was her nightly prayer
 To live to close his sightless eyes ;
 For this her torturing pains to bear,
 Then sink in death ere morning rise.
 Who, were she gone, the staff would guide
 With which he feels, amiss, his way ?
 Who, careful, lay the stone aside,
 That might his tottering footstep stay ?
 Who lead him to the shelter'd stile
 That fronts the sun at noontide hour,
 And watch the western clouds the while
 To warn him of the gathering shower ?

Published Ballad from Nature.

IN one of the last cottages of the village of Overhurst, dwelt Nicholas and Sarah Foster. There, in their accustomed seats, did the neighbours for many years find old Nicholas, still bending over the embers of his humble hearth, and Sarah still gazing through the casement window, in patient endurance of the evils with which each was visited.

They rest now in their quiet graves ; but those who have known that ancient couple will not easily forget their appearance, or that of all around them : they will remember the well-polished wooden chair in which the old woman sat, both her hands pressed tightly against her right side, as if to quell the tortures of an agonizing and mortal complaint which had long preyed upon her : they will remember the very dress she wore, — such as is rarely seen of late years. But Sarah was an English peasant of the olden time, and she changed not with the fashion of the day. Her cap had a narrow, close, stiff border ; the crown was high and well-starched ; and round it was tightly pinned a broad piece of dark-purple ribbon. Her grey hair was turned back over a roll, — one of the last remaining specimens of that mode of dressing the hair. Her waist reached to her hips ; her sleeves were tight, and ended at the elbow. The gown was open in front ; and the apron, which was of spotless white, always seemed to be just out of the folds.

Her usual seat, by the long casement of their clean and decent kitchen, commanded a view down the village street ; before her was a clean deal table, which ran the whole length of the window, and upon it lay her spectacles and a book of prayer.

Her countenance bore the traces of extreme suffering, and her brows were always contracted ; but on her lips dwelt a patient smile. She swayed her body incessantly backwards and forwards, as if to allay her pain ; but her voice was invariably cheerful, and even lively, — for Nicholas was blind ; — and to cheer his days of darkness was her constant task of love.

Nicholas in his youth had been a hedger, and he still wore the brown leather coat peculiar to his calling. His place was in the chimney-corner ; his back towards the light, his two hands resting on his staff, his chin upon his hands, and his sightless eyes fixed on vacancy.

Tempted by the beauty of the sunset, the 'squire's family one evening extended their walk to the village, and, as they frequently did, paid a visit to Master Foster and his dame. Sarah's face lighted up with a momentary expression of joy as they trooped in, filling the humble dwelling ; and the old man smiled upon them the patient placid smile of blindness.

There was the 'squire's lady, the gentle and kind Mrs. Mowbray ; and her blooming daughter, the young Alice, in the full flush of maiden loveliness ; and the tall, slender, merry Fanny, just verging on womanhood ; and two stout school-boys ; and the rosy little Emma, who had quickly gained possession of the tortoiseshell cat, and was trying high its powers of endurance by her childish mode of fondling it. Besides this, the usual party, there was also a dark and handsome youth, who appeared to be all attention to Mrs. Mowbray ; while the young Alice's cheeks were more brilliant even than usual, her smile more animated, and her eyes more downcast.

Old Sarah Foster soon perceived that the village report, which said the 'squire's eldest daughter was likely to be early settled, was better founded than is usually the case with such reports.

"Where is Susan this evening ?" inquired Mrs. Mowbray.

"'Tis Freshfield fair to-day, madam," answered the dame, "and all the young people hereabouts are gone to see the

humours of it : and so her father and I thought poor Susan should take a little amusement for once. She has but a dull life with us, so poorly as I am, and so helpless as my good man is ! ”

“ I think you look rather better this evening, Dame Foster,” said Alice, who was in that happy frame of mind when it is painful to be obliged to believe others less fortunate than one’s-self, and when one had far rather be called upon to sympathise in their joys than in their sorrows.

“ Thank you, Miss Alice,” replied the old woman, while a sudden pain caused the smile, with which she tried to receive Alice’s kind words, to die away on her lips, and her brows involuntarily to become more contracted. — “ Thank you, my dear young lady, I am much as usual ; but I do not mind my pains as long as I am able to do for my poor Nicholas. I know his ways so well. Susan, herself, could not guess all his thoughts as I can. Blindness is a heavy affliction, ladies. He wants some one who can speak comfort to him at times, when he gets thinking his sad thoughts ; some one who can talk of by-gone days, when we had every thing to make us happy ; and one who can remind him of that better place where we shall be happier than even the happiest are in this world. Morning and night I pray to be spared as long as my poor Nicholas lives, however hard my pains may be to bear ; and morning and night I pray that, when he is gone, I may never see another sun rise.”

A silence of some moments ensued. All were touched by the pure and devoted affection so unconsciously expressed by the old woman. Alice’s eyes had filled with tears ; for one instant they were raised to those of the youth to whom she was betrothed, but they as quickly fell again.

“ I am sure, dame, you are a pattern for all wives,” at length added Mrs. Mowbray.

At this moment, the sound of distant merriment was heard ; and parties of young folks, the slant western sun shining on their holiday apparel, were seen trooping down the headland of the opposite hill, under the shelter of the hazel copse.

“ My Susan will soon be at home,” said the dame, “ for I told her to be sure and not stay late at these merry-makings. I always hold that no good comes of too much pleasure, madam ; and, in my young days, girls had not half the liberty

they take now. I can't say, however, but that Susan is a good girl, and minds what we old folks say to her : but she is light-hearted, poor thing, and has not known trouble yet — God grant it may be long before she does ! There she comes, poor girl ! Ah ! time was when I could move as nimbly as she does, and laugh as heartily. You must excuse her, ladies : she little thinks what visitors we have in our cottage, or she would know better than to be so free of her jokes," added the dame, as Susan and her lover reached the garden gate, and she laughingly shut it against him, and ran into the cottage.

Upon finding herself in the presence of the 'squire's family, she stopped suddenly, while the blood rushed over her face ; and she dropped a court'sy, graceful in its awkwardness, and took refuge close to her mother's chair. George Wells meanwhile had followed ; and, threatening that he would steal a kiss in revenge for the trick she had played him, burst into the cottage after her. His shame-faced look of dismay when he perceived the company assembled was irresistibly comic : Mrs. Mowbray smiled, Fanny tried to be serious, the two boys laughed outright, while Alice and Captain Harcourt each maintained a countenance of imperturbable unconsciousness.

The visit was now speedily brought to a conclusion ; and Susan and her lover were left to settle their little quarrel, relieved from the awe inspired by " the gentlefolks."

They had already kept company, as it is termed, two years. George had saved enough to furnish a cottage decently ; and Susan had already provided the linen, blankets, and counterpane, which, among the better sort of poor people, and those who think it necessary to make any provision before they enter into the marriage state, is reckoned the proper dowry of the bride. They only waited to hear of a cottage which they might rent, before they were asked in church.

George Wells was invited to stay supper, and the quick and lively Susan had soon arranged the humble meal. The rashers of bacon were fried, the smoking potatoes were on the table : she had placed her father's chair, and she gently led him from his chimney-nook, and settled him comfortably to his supper ; then, gaily kissing him on the forehead, she began to tell him of the wonders they had seen at the fair. The old man turned his sightless eyes towards her, and, leaning forward as he listened, smiled placidly to hear of all the brilliant things which

he might never gaze on again ; and the dame forgot her pains for a while, rejoicing in the happiness of her child. " But, mother, you do not know why I am so overjoyed to-day ! I have such a piece of news for you ! I think you will be as pleased as I am ; and father too ! Won't they, George ? "

" Maybe they will, if it comes true."

" Well, mother, guess."

" I never was a good guesser, Susan, not in my best days ; and I shall never begin now."

" Well, father, do you guess, then."

" Lord save you, child ! how should I know ? Maybe 'tis that the 'squire will give away coals gratis to the poor this Christmas ? "

" No, 't an't that ; 'tis something that will make us happy at Christmas and at Lady-day, at Midsummer and at Michaelmas, and all the year round, as long as we all live."

" If so be that it comes true ; but we are not sure yet, Susan," interposed the more steady George, who did not run away with a notion so quickly as the light-hearted Susan.

" Oh, George ! I know they will give up the cottage ; you will see if they don't. They say, father, that Master Mumford is going to set up carpenter, and that he is to move to Mr. Peters's shop, and Mr. Peters is to be a great cabinet-maker at Turnholme ; and then what should hinder us taking Master Mumford's cottage, and living next door to you ? I should not mind marrying if I was to go no farther than that from you and mother ; for then I could do for you as well as I can now, and mother need only just trouble herself with little odd jobs that will be rather a pleasure than a trouble to her."

" But, Susan, we don't know, even if Master Mumford should set up at Mr. Peters's, whether the 'squire will let the cottage to us. If you run off so at score, maybe you'll only meet with a disappointment. However, I am willing to go to the 'squire's to-morrow morning, and see what I can do."

" That's right, George ! " exclaimed the eager Susan ; " that's what I have been wanting all along ! "

" Well, I never said I was against trying ; only I a'nt for making too sure of a thing before we have got it. You have heard, maybe, Susan, of counting your chickens before they are hatched ! "

“Don’t you make game of me, George! I’ll answer for it, the ’squire is not the man to say no to us; he has always been a kind friend to father:” while the suspicion that he seldom missed an opportunity of asking her how she did, and taking a look at her sparkling black eyes, may have increased her reliance on his kindness to her blind father.

“I shall be glad enough if we are so lucky as to get the refusal of it,” replied George; “for I see little chance of our finding any other place hereabouts; and I would never be the man to take you into another parish, with your parents such poor afflicted creatures as they are! I’m not one of your high-flown, flighty folks; and I’ve never read any of such fine books as you and your school-fellows sometimes get hold of, Susan; but I can read my Bible pretty middling, and I know what is the duty we owe to our parents, who took care of us when we could do nothing for ourselves, and I would never wish my wife not to be a dutiful child.”

Old Sarah Foster looked approvingly at her future son-in-law; and Nicholas said, “You are a young man with good principles, and it will be a pleasure to give our Susan to such a one as you. When I die, I shall rest quiet in my grave if I know she is married to you.”

“They did not always speak so of you, George!” answered the merry girl. “You used to say I was a wilful girl, did not you, father, when I said I would have George, or nobody? So, after all, I have got an old head on young shoulders, though nobody has given me credit for it yet!”

It was not many weeks after Freshfield fair, when the village of Overhurst was all alive with another and a greater jubilee. The church bells rang a merry peal from the very sunrise; the village maidens, in their most trim apparel, were in waiting to strew flowers on the path of Alice Mowbray and Captain Harcourt; an ox was roasted whole in Overhurst Park, and the beer flowed as beer should flow on such occasions.

The ’squire had promised Master Mumford’s house to George Wells, and he had obtained Susan’s consent that they should soon be asked in church. Susan was all blushes and smiles, as among the other maidens she scattered flowers on the path; and she court’sied with a pretty confusion when the

bride gave her a nod of recognition, as she hurried past into the travelling carriage at the gate.

Hitherto, all had seemed to smile on Susan ; for, having been accustomed to them from her youth, her father's blindness and her mother's ill-health did not dwell upon her mind as misfortunes ; while the wish to enliven her parents, and the pleasure they took in her sprightliness, had rather tended to increase the natural gaiety of her disposition. But on this, the happiest day of her life, a change came over the destiny of Susan Foster.

The festivities of Overhurst Park concluded with a dance on the green ; and Susan, gay, blooming, and thoughtless, seemed to be the reigning village belle.

The scene was one which could not be looked upon without interest. There the good-natured Mrs. Mowbray might be seen, moving about among her humble guests, with a kind word for each. She was flushed and agitated, breathless and tearful ; but she had given her daughter to a son-in-law whom she thought perfection, and she was as happy as a mother can be who has for the first time parted from her child. The simple congratulations of the poor people overcame, while they pleased, her. The tears started into her eyes when she heard the hearty " God bless Miss Alice ! " — " May the captain make her a good husband ! " — " May Miss Alice be as happy as she deserves to be ! " which greeted her on all sides.

Half ashamed of her own emotion, she turned away to a demure and staid matron, who sat somewhat apart, watching the young ones as they footed it merrily on the grass to the music of the village band : " Well, Dame Dixon, I hope you have enjoyed yourself, and that you have had everything you wished for ? "

" Everything was beautiful, I am sure, madam," replied Mrs. Dixon, rising respectfully from her seat : " his honour has treated us with the best of everything."

" Is your daughter among the dancers ? " inquired Mrs. Mowbray, as she saw Mrs. Dixon's eye glance frequently towards the country-dance.

" Yes, madam ; Jane is very partial to dancing — almost too partial," she continued, as a bouncing couple came flying by beyond the double hedge of dancers. " Jane," said the

mother, as she clutched the maiden's red elbow, "don't you see that madam is here? Where's your manners, girl?"

Jane stopped short, dropped a sort of court'sy, and composed her laughing countenance, while the partner disappeared among the crowd, with the sheepish bashfulness which characterises an English clown, especially in his youth.

"I am afraid we have stopped their dancing," said Mrs. Mowbray. "Pray do not mind me, Jane. I hope I have not frightened away your partner;" and the kind hostess glided on.

"What is become of Will Smith?" asked Dame Dixon.

"I don't know," replied Jane; "and what's more, I don't care. I'm very tired," she continued, as she let herself drop on the bench by her mother's side; while her countenance relaxed into as decided an expression of sadness, as it had previously worn that of uncontrolled merriment.

"Then I am sure, Jane, I wish you would not make so free with him, nor with half-a-dozen other young men. You have too much to say to them by half."

"It won't do to sit and mope," cried Jane, starting up, as George Wells and Susan Foster were slowly advancing to join the dancers, with a lingering step, as though they were loth to have their conversation broken in upon. Jane was off like a startled deer; and in a few moments Dame Dixon saw her dancing away with more spirit than ever, having already provided herself with another partner.

Mr. Mowbray meantime had stopped Susan Foster to speak to her, and she was blushing and court'sying under the compliments he was paying her on her bright skin and her black eyes, and George was shifting from leg to leg under the compliments he was paying him upon his good taste and his good fortune.

Mr. Mowbray had an eye for beauty, and certainly felt the glow of charity more strongly in his bosom towards the young and the good-looking of his parishioners, than towards the old and the ill-favoured: at least he was apt to think Mrs. Mowbray understood the wants and the sorrows of the latter better than he did.

"And who is that buxom lass?" said he to his wife, who was looking on upon the scene; "she is a light-hearted one. How indefatigable she is!"

“That is old Dixon’s daughter, Jane, to whom you always used to give a shilling for opening the gate, because her eyes were so blue.”

“So she is! Faith, she has turned out a fine creature! But, bless me, who is this pretty woman? Quite an *élégante*, I declare! Where can she come from?”

“Why, from our own farm of Holmy-bank, to be sure. Do you not see Farmer Otley close behind her? and do you not know he has been married this year, though they are only lately come to the farm?”

“Why you know, my dear, I have a taste for the beautiful, and not for the sublime; and I quite overlook everything else when there is such a pretty woman as this to be seen.”

“I am sure, if you are thinking of beauty, Mr. Otley is almost the handsomest man I ever saw in my life; and if she looks like a lady with her smart dress, he looks ten times more really distinguished, with those fine features, and his head like an antique gem, though he is dressed as befits his station in life.”

“Well, my dear, you may admire Mr. Otley if you like it: it is only fair to allow me to admire his wife. I have just recollected, I have a great deal to say to Farmer Otley,” continued Mr. Mowbray, laughing; and he was soon in deep conversation with his tenant about his course of cropping and his stock: while Mrs. Mowbray secretly reflected, “Mr. Mowbray is growing too old to talk so much about beauty. I feel quite uncomfortable when he goes on so before the children.”

“Well, mamma!” interposed Fanny; “don’t you think Susan Foster is much prettier than Mrs. Otley? Her eyes are much larger, in the first place; and then she is so quiet, and does not look up and down so; and then, as for her nose ——”

“My dear, Susan Foster is a very respectable, worthy young woman, and very good-looking; and now do not let us hear any more about beauty. I am really sick of the subject.”

It was not that Mrs. Mowbray was jealous, for Mr. Mowbray was a kind husband, and she knew it was only “his way.” She knew that his foible was not to “affect a virtue though he had it not;” but rather to talk, as if he were far less scrupulous than he really was. It was only before the children, or in the hearing of strangers, who did not know “his way,” that Mrs. Mowbray felt seriously annoyed.

Mr. Otley was of course gratified when his landlord wished to be introduced to his wife ; and Mr. Mowbray, with twinkling eyes and gay smile, was soon inquiring into the condition of her pigs, her poultry, and her dairy.

"Oh, sir !" she replied, with a tender look at her husband ; "you must not ask me about the pigs : Mr. O. says I am a sad fine lady ;" (and she looked up for applause ;) "but I never could bear the smell of those creatures," (and she looked down with a refined cast of countenance :) "but I am very fond of my dairy ; am I not, Mr. O. ? and I slip on my clogs every morning, and step into my dairy ; don't I, Mr. O. ?"

"Why, yes, Lizzy, you do that, to be sure ; but my mother used to see to the scouring of the milk-pans herself, and would never let father have any peace if there was not always plenty of wood-ashes to clean them with, every morning."

"Oh dear, Mr. Otley ! don't you go off now about that dear good old soul, your poor dear mother. I am sure Mr. Mowbray will not care to hear what she did twenty years ago."

"I had always rather hear about a pretty young woman of the present day, than about an old one, be she ever so good, of the past day," replied Mr. Mowbray, with a bow ; and Mrs. Otley simpered, and blushed, and looked down, and removed a curl which fell a little too much over her eyes, and then added, turning to her husband, —

"You know, Mr. Otley, I have promised to be very good about the poultry, and to look after the eggs every morning, as soon as you have made a raised path across the farm-yard to the hen-house. But really, sir, the farm-yard is in such a pickle, that nobody but the labouring men could think of crossing it."

"Impossible that Mr. Otley can have so little gallantry as to wish those pretty little feet should step into the farm-yard ! He would not be such a Goth !"

"That's just what I am always telling Mr. O.," added Mrs. Otley, turning round exultingly ; "I am always telling him he is a Goth and a Vandal ; and then he says he does not know who the Goths and the Vandals are ; and then I laugh, and tell him he is more of a Goth and a Vandal than ever."

"Ah, Lizzy ! you must not mind everything his honour

says ; he is pleased to joke sometimes. But he knows well enough that a farmer has need of his head, and both his hands too, and that a farmer's wife should be a stirring body : he knows well enough they are the sort who pay their rent to the day, and keep their land in good condition."

"You, and your father before you, have been very good tenants, Master Otley ; no landlord need wish for better : but here comes Mrs. Mowbray. My dear, you must allow me to have the pleasure of presenting you to our new neighbour, our friend Mr. Otley's pretty wife."

Mrs. Otley simpered, "Mrs. Mowbray had already done her the honour ——"

"You need not introduce us, Mr. Mowbray," answered Mrs. Mowbray, with a shade of asperity in her tone, which amused her husband ; "I have already had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Otley's pretty farm, and her sweet little boy : Emma and I walked to Holmy-bank a few days ago, and Mr. Otley showed us all about the place."

"How are the dear little calves, Mr. Otley," exclaimed Emma, "that Fanny and I were feeding ?"

"They are growing nicely, thank you, young ladies," replied the farmer ; "and I shall be proud to show them to you again, if you would favour us with a call."

"Oh ! Mrs. Otley, what a pleasure the calves must be to you ! I dare say you pass half the day feeding them : I am sure I should !"

"They are pretty innocent creatures, indeed, miss ; and if our old Daniel would keep the pens a little cleaner, I should have no objection to looking at them oftener than I do. But, if Mrs. Mowbray should honour us with another visit, I think I could show you something that would please young ladies more than such common, every-day creatures as calves. I have got two beautiful green parrots, that can chatter, and will repeat anything. And I am sure it would please you to see the curious Gothic castle, all made of shells, and the lady at the window playing on the guitar !"

"Oh ! I should like another walk to Holmy-bank of all things ; but it would be to see the dear calves : I like them much better than parrots."

"My girls are very homely in their tastes, Mrs. Otley ; they are quite country lasses ;" and Mrs. Mowbray glided on,

a little provoked that her husband should find so much to say to such a would-be fine lady as the farmer's pretty wife: "and he has never remembered to speak once to good old Mrs. Williams, our own steward's mother," she thought, as she proceeded towards Mrs. Williams, in order to make up for his omission.

The evening was now beginning to close: the cockchafers were humming under the beech-trees, and were flying into the faces and among the hair of those who had taken refuge under their shade. Much was the merriment they gave rise to, and many a rustic coquette affected a little more fear than she really felt of their harmless, though sticky, claws; while Jane Dixon laughed rather longer and louder than the occasion seemed to require.

The sun had quite sunk below the horizon; and the vapours, which had been rising during the heat of the sultry day, were suddenly condensed, and hung on the lower grounds, looking silvery-white under the light of the summer moon.

Susan and some other village girls, tired with dancing and the excitement of the day, mounted an empty waggon which was returning homewards, and the merry group of thoughtless young creatures thus made their entry into the quiet village street. Susan had, in the exuberance of her spirits, danced the longest and the latest; the day had been oppressively hot, but with the evening came a heavy dew, and the air was chilly. When Susan arrived at home, her mother thought she looked pale; and scolded George for having allowed her to return in the waggon, after having heated herself with dancing.

"Time enough for me to mind him, mother, when once we are married," answered the joyous girl; "I have but a little while longer to be my own mistress, and I must use my liberty now, or never!" and the gay creature laughed, conscious of her power over father, mother, and lover.

"Oh, mother, we have been so happy! I never was so happy before, and, maybe, never shall again! never, at least, if you teach George that I am not to have my own way!" and she turned her beaming eyes from her mother to her lover, while old Sarah hoped she had many days in store for her of more true happiness, if not of such flighty gaiety. Alas! it was well for them they could not look into futurity.

The next morning Susan woke with a heavy cold, and an unusual pain in her eyes ; they were bloodshot and inflamed. The dame reproached her with her imprudence : and doctored her with that degree of discretion which is usual among the poor people. Her eyes became hourly more painful.

As he returned from work, George paid her his accustomed visit. He wished she would see the doctor ; but she laughingly replied she should be well to-morrow, for old Dame Jones had given her an infallible remedy for all complaints of the eyes.

CHAPTER II.

O dolce Amor che di riso t' ammantì
Quanto parevi ardente in que' favilli
Ch' aveano spirto sol di pensier santi.

DANTE, *Paradiso*, cant. 26mo.

DAME JONES's infallible remedy rather increased than diminished the evil ; and Susan's spirits began to fail her at the continued suffering, the enforced idleness, and also in some degree at the disfigurement occasioned by the dimming of her brilliant eyes ; for she was not without a share of female vanity, — vanity which is indulged as almost a laudable feeling when it is for the sake of another that personal attractions are valued.

The Sunday on which Susan and her lover were to be asked in church was fast approaching, when she half sadly, half sportively, thus addressed him : “ You had better go to Mr. Sandford, George, and tell him not to say any thing about us in church. It would never do to be a bride with such eyes as these ; ” and she tried to smile, though she was more inclined to weep.

“ There will be plenty of time for your eyes to get quite well, Susan, before we are out-asked.”

“ They must begin to mend, George, before we need talk of their getting well,” replied Susan with a sigh ; and then she playfully added, “ Do you remember your telling me when Miss Alice, that was, walked down the church-yard, looking so blushing and beautiful, that you would show them a prettier bride before long ; and that, though she would not

have such a smart lace-veil to hang over her face, she would have a pair of brighter eyes to shine out of her bonnet. You must wait a bit, George, before your words can come true."

"Not long, Susan, not long; I am sure you will be well before three weeks are over; that's a long time."

"So it is, George, — a long, long time to be as I am! But the folks shan't laugh at you for having such a homely half-blind bride. I should not like you to be ashamed of your wife, upon the wedding-day at all events;" and she tried to carry off her sadness and her mortification by an assumed air of sprightliness.

Still poor Susan's eyes did not mend; her mother's applications, and Dame Jones's wonderful remedy, proved equally unavailing. Susan's spirits quite gave way: she often sat and wept when her mother's back was towards her, and her sightless father could not perceive how sad his once light-hearted girl was now become. After Alice's marriage, the family of the Mowbrays had left home for some time, and Mr. Sandford was old and had been ill, or Susan's sufferings would never have been allowed to continue so long, without her having been provided with better medical attendance. The old couple themselves had derived so little benefit from the advice of doctors, that they, as is frequently the case among the poor, reposed more confidence in the doctoring of Mr. Sandford, or of any other gentleman or lady, than in that of the first physician in the land. They all felt anxious that the good minister should recover his health, and visit them; and they flattered themselves he would soon afford Susan some relief. When he did call, he was shocked at the alteration in the poor girl's appearance, and he instantly sent for the best medical practitioner in the neighbourhood, deeming the case much too important a one for his own unassisted advice.

Mr. Sandford's countenance first excited alarm, serious alarm, in Susan's mind: for the first time she trembled for her eye-sight; and an icy chill ran through her when she thought of her future fate.

George called as he returned home from work; and, on hearing that Mr. Sandford had visited the cottage, his countenance brightened: "Then now we shall see you begin to mend! What has our good minister told you to do, Susan? Am I to go to his house to-night to fetch any stuff for you?"

"No, George, no. He says I must see the real doctor. He says he can't do any thing for me himself." George looked amazed and confounded. "He says he does not understand such things himself;" and she added, in a tone which she tried to make perfectly calm and composed, "he says he is afraid I shall not be well for a long time."

George was in despair. He thought, if Mr. Sandford could not cure a complaint, it must indeed be a bad one! He turned his eyes towards the old dame: she sat, as usual, rocking herself backwards and forwards, with her hands pressed to her side, in mental as well as bodily suffering, for she too had been struck by the manner of their pastor. "We shall hear what the doctor says to-morrow, George! I am sorry now that we kept waiting and waiting for Mr. Sandford to get well; but I have had enough of doctors in my time, and I was loth to begin again with them. We must hope for the best, and not be down-hearted."

"She is young, poor thing!" added old Nicholas; "and 'tis to be hoped she won't be afflicted at her age as I am. I was near three-score when I lost my eye-sight, and I thought it a heavy affliction. It would be a deal worse for a young thing just turned her one-and-twenty," continued the father, at once uttering in plain English the utmost extent of their fears, in the simple straightforward manner common among the poor people, but which would sound harsh and unfeeling to the sensibilities of the more refined.

"I only hope I may be able to bear my trials as well as you do, father, if I am to be so afflicted," exclaimed Susan, as she burst into an agony of tears, rendered the more violent by her having previously attempted to control herself.

"Susan, Susan, you must not take on so," said George, anxious to soothe her.

"You'll do your poor eyes more harm if you cry, Susan," said her mother, "than the doctor can cure in a week. You must try not to give way, Susan dear!"

"Cheer up, my child," added Nicholas. "We do not know yet what the doctor will say; perhaps it may not be so bad after all."

Susan dried her tears, and tried to be composed; but the inmates of Nicholas Foster's humble cottage retired to rest that night with sadness in their hearts, which was not destined to

be much alleviated by the doctor's visit the next day. He talked of time and patience, of a cooling diet and soothing applications, a tranquil mind and the necessity of not fretting,—of all injunctions the most difficult to obey! He gave them hope certainly, which, though not enough to relieve Susan's mind, was eagerly caught at by George, and he was beginning to urge that it could do no harm if they were asked in church.

"Not yet, George, not yet. Wait till I begin to mend. I should be but a useless wife to you at present. I have given up the thought of making a pretty bride," she continued in a tone almost of bitterness; "but I must be able to do for you, and to keep your house tidy: so there's no use in talking about being asked in church, George."

George desisted, for her manner was so resolved he felt it impossible to oppose her.

CHAPTER III.

*E l'aspettar del male è mal peggiore
Forse, che non parrebbe il mal presente.*

Tasso.

SUSAN was a good-hearted girl, but she had a high spirit. She had a generous temper, but it was not always under control. Of all qualities a sweet temper is perhaps the one least cultivated in the lower ranks of life. The peculiar disposition is not watched; care is not taken to distinguish between the passionate child, the sulky, the obstinate, and the timid. The children of the poor are allowed a latitude of speech unknown among the higher orders, and they are free from the salutary restraint imposed by what is termed "company."

When in the enjoyment of full health and strength, the ungoverned temper of the poor is one of their most striking faults, while their resignation under affliction, whether mental or bodily, is the point of all others in which the rich might with advantage study to imitate them.

Susan's spirit was not yet tamed by affliction. There were moments when she could not bear, without impatience, the pain her eyes occasioned her, and the weight of care which oppressed her mind.

It was towards George that she most frequently evinced any signs of captiousness ; and yet it was on his account that she most poignantly felt her present affliction, and her future prospects. She was more unhappy than she quite ventured to own to herself, or to him ; more apprehensive of what might be the result. She feared he would not always continue to be as kind as he now was. She could not expect it ; and she sometimes received his simple attentions as if she was more surprised, than touched by them.

One evening he brought her some flowers from his father's garden.

"Well ! I shall be able to smell," she said, "even when I shall not be able to see ; but perhaps, George, you will not go on bringing me flowers then ! What beautiful double-stocks these are ! we can't get any to grow like these in our little bit of garden."

"I raised them for father myself, Susan ; so I don't see why we should not have some, just as fine, and finer, when we have a garden of our own !" And poor George looked pleased at her praise of his pet flower.

"I dare say you will never get any to come so thick and so double another time, — even if you should try," answered Susan despondingly ; for she thought, "when could she hope to have a home of her own ?"

"And do you think I shall not try, Susan, to make my wife's home as nice as father's ?"

"Maybe you will, — and I may not be there to see it."

"Why, Susan, I do not know what is come over you ; there is no pleasing you. I thought you would like my flowers !"

"And so I do, George ; and I am very much obliged to you for them," she continued in a tone of gratitude almost beyond what the occasion called for. Presently she added, in a sad, low voice, "You are very good to me, very good indeed."

Just at this moment Nicholas and his dame were seen approaching the garden-gate. She was leading him from the stile over which he loved to lean, and to feel the warm sun on his eyes, and turn his face in the direction of the setting orb. Sarah was hobbling back, guiding the blind old man, whose firmer step assisted in supporting her suffering dame. George

opened the cottage-door to admit them, and the slant beams of the sun glanced through the opening upon poor Susan's eyes.

The sudden light pained her ; and although she had one moment before reproached herself with not being sufficiently grateful for the kindness shown her, she exclaimed somewhat pettishly, " Don't you know, George, how it hurts my eyes to have the light glare upon them all at once ? " at the same time pushing back her chair with an impatient movement, which was accounted for, but not justified, by the pain which she suffered.

The sight of her poor blind father, and of his meek expression of countenance, recalled her to herself. She hastened to him and helped him to his chimney-nook, and then assisted her mother to her usual chair. They each thanked her in a kind and gentle voice, and she felt inwardly rebuked by their patience and their submission.

George had stood aloof, awkward and mortified. She drew near him. " I beg your pardon, George," she murmured : " George, I do not know what is come to me ; " and she burst into tears.

" Never fret, Susan ; I don't mind. 'Tis very natural, I dare say, that you should be a little testy or so : don't cry, your mother says 'tis so bad for you. I don't mind, though, to be sure, you do sometimes hurt my feelings a little." Dame Forster thought she saw him brush off a tear with the back of his hand.

" Why, what's the matter, Susan ? Sure you and George have not been falling out, have you ? "

" Oh, no ! not a bit of it, dame ! "

" George is very good to me, mother ; but I don't know how it is, I believe sometimes I am hard to please ; " and she strove to smile.

" Ah, my poor girl," said Nicholas, " trouble is hard to bear when first it comes ; but the back gets used to the burden. If you are a good girl, and say your prayers as should be, God will give you strength to bear what it is his pleasure to lay upon you. Won't He, dame ? I am sure we have found it so. He is very merciful ; and if He gives us trouble, He sends us comfort to make up for it. If it has pleased Him to afflict me with blindness, He has given me a good wife — ay,

the best of wives ; and if she is afflicted with her side, poor soul ! why He has given her, and me too, dutiful children, and children who, some of them, are likely to do very well. There are our two boys, though they are settled in distant counties, they are very good to us, and have never let us want for anything, but have kept us off the parish as yet ; and that's what few people can say for their sons. If we do but look the right way for them, we shall all find we have our comforts ; though we may not be so sharp to find them out, as we are to find our troubles."

Among Susan's causes of uneasiness there was one which she did not like to dwell upon to her parents. She had been used to assist towards the maintenance of the family, by taking in needle-work. She had now for many weeks been obliged to give up her occupation ; and she felt that, though her brothers provided for the comfort of their parents, it was hard upon them to have a helpless sister also to support.

She was allowed to be much in the air if she wore a shade over her eyes ; and she frequently made use of this liberty to visit an old neighbour, who had long been bedridden, and who earned herself a decent livelihood by knitting stockings for the poor, and muffettees and handkerchiefs for the gentry, who admired the intricate and curious stitches with which she adorned her work.

Susan, who already contemplated the probability of being eventually condemned to blindness, thought it would prove useful if, while she still retained some eyesight, she was to make herself acquainted with old Nelly's art ; and accordingly she applied herself diligently to acquire the requisite proficiency. She would sometimes close her eyes and try whether she could thus accomplish the difficult stitch ; and then, when she opened them for the purpose of ascertaining where lay her mistake, she would sigh to think the time might soon arrive when the darkness would be eternal.

Susan's visits to Nelly Warner had a considerable and not unfavourable influence upon her future character.

The old woman was naturally of a querulous disposition, and was more inclined to dwell on the many privations to which her complaint condemned her, than on the superior comforts which fell to her lot beyond others who were equally afflicted. She had an attentive grand-daughter, who was de-

voted to her ; and she was not in want of what might in her line of life be deemed comforts, for the neighbouring gentry showed her much kindness.

Susan could not but compare the patient endurance of her mother, the placid submission of her father, with the fretfulness of Nelly Warner ; and when she answered her complaints with such arguments for resignation as naturally occurred to her mind, she could not but apply the words she uttered to her own case.

“ So you are come at last, Susan,” said old Nelly, in a reproachful tone ; “ I have been expecting you this half-hour. The church clock has gone three, I do not know how long. Young people should not keep old folks waiting, more especially when they want them to do them a kindness.”

“ It is only ten minutes past three, Nelly ; I looked as I came by ; but I am sorry I was not quite to my time. The bright sun dazzled my eyes, and I went back to get mother to alter my green shade.”

“ Ah ! young folks always have some excuse or another which they think mighty good themselves. It fidgets a poor body like me to lie wondering, and expecting, and listening to hear the door open ! When one is helpless and ailing, as I am, folks should take care not to worry one. It is bad enough to bear one’s own miseries. Here I lie, and what pleasure have I from one week’s end to another ?”

“ Little enough of pleasure, indeed, dear Nelly, except the pleasure of doing a kindness by me,” said Susan, as she took out her knitting needles. “ Then you have little Patty to help you, and to bring you all you want, and she is a good child. Some people, Nelly, have not the comfort of such a good little girl to attend to them : sure you have much to be grateful for.”

“ I can’t tell what I have to be grateful for. There’s Master Thompson, he is two years older than I am, and he is hearty and well, and goes to his work regularly, and earns as much as a young man. And there’s my own sister Pratt, why she’s ten years older than I am, and she can walk to market.”

“ Oh, but, Nelly, the way to be contented is to compare our condition with those who are worse off than ourselves. You want for nothing ; you are able to earn a good deal yourself. Now, I can’t earn anything yet :” she added in a very low voice ; “ and people are very good to you.”

“They like my warm muffettees well enough ; but I need not thank them, but myself, for that.”

Susan felt shocked at Nelly's ill-temper and ingratitude, and she thought what a hard task it must be for Patty to study the humours of such a discontented old woman.

She remembered how kind her mother had always been to her, she remembered how patiently George had borne with her, and she resolved she would not put him to such trials any more.

The uncertainty in which she remained concerning her future fate, sometimes appeared to her harder to bear than the knowledge of the truth would be, and she made up her mind she would some day ask the doctor what was his real opinion of her case. But many a visit passed over without her summoning the requisite courage. If he should destroy all the hopes she still indulged, what should she do? How ought she to conduct herself towards George? Could she wish him to be 'cumbered with a blind wife?

While all these contending feelings were working in her mind, she found it difficult to be always gentle and placid, and yet she was ashamed before her good resigned parents to give way to impatience. They never tutored her, they never gave her advice ; but

“Example more than precept weighs,”

and their whole lives were one continued moral lesson.

Susan was one day sitting at home, with her back towards the light, diligently plying her long needles, when she suddenly addressed her mother: “Mother, do you think I shall ever get well?”

“There's no saying, my dear Susan ; such things are in the hands of Providence !”

“Mother, has the doctor ever told you anything?” she asked, with a great effort.

“No, my child, he has never said anything for certain : but how do you feel your eyes yourself?”

“No better, mother, no better ; I don't think they will last long, and that's the truth of it,” she said, relieved by giving utterance to what had been so long preying on her mind.

“My poor Susan ! The Lord have mercy upon you, and bear you up under this affliction !—and He will, my child,—

depend upon it, He will. But it goes harder with me, Susan, to see you so, than it has to bear all the other troubles I have ever been visited with."

"Well, mother, don't fret; we will hope," said Susan, alarmed herself at the alarm she had excited in her mother's bosom, and half disappointed at not meeting with more reassurance; but Sarah had long perceived with grief that her daughter made no progress towards amendment, and the melancholy truth had gradually forced itself upon her mind.

The doctor called one day, when the dame was leading her good man to his usual stile, and Susan was therefore alone. She determined to put the question to him, and to be assured whether she ought, or ought not, to relinquish all hope. Having thus armed herself with resolution to hear the worst, she framed her question with such apparent composure, and as if she entertained so little expectation of recovery, that the doctor thought there was no occasion to deceive her, and did not attempt to deny that her fears were only too well grounded. She dropped him a respectful court'sy, and only said, "Thank you, sir." He praised her for her strength of mind, advised her to seek fortitude whence alone it was to be found, and recommended her being as much as possible in the open air, that her general health might not suffer.

When he had taken his leave,—when poor Susan found herself quite alone,—then all her strength of mind forsook her. She relieved her bursting heart by floods of tears; and had scarcely recovered any composure, when her father and mother returned from their evening stroll to the neighbouring stile. That night Susan could not sleep, but she pondered deeply on the future.

CHAPTER IV.

But not to understand a treasure's worth
Till time has stolen away the slighted good,
Is cause of half the poverty we feel,
And makes the world the wilderness it is.

COWPER.

AFTER her conversation with the doctor, Susan applied herself more diligently than ever to her knitting, and succeeded in

acquiring such dexterity, that she nearly equalled her mistress. She took every opportunity of walking in the fields, for she thought she should like to see the beautiful face of nature as long as it was permitted her to do so. George found that all peevishness had disappeared; his kindnesses were received with gratitude, and any little omission on his part did not seem to be perceived. The days had become so much shorter that she could no longer take a walk with him each evening when he returned from work, but on Sundays they still wandered through the fields together. He one day remarked how long the oaks had kept their leaves this year.

“I can see that the woods look thick,” she replied; “but I cannot well distinguish their colour. However, I am glad the leaves last late this autumn, for I shall never see them again; before spring I shall be quite dark, George. I shall be very sorry not to see the young lambs: I used to like to watch them skip about upon the headlands, when the sun shone out on a spring morning; and I shall be sorry not to see the primroses in the dell by Fairmead Shaw. O dear! I shall tie up no more bunches of violets in Oldash Lane, where the banks are always so blue with them! I did not know at the time how much I enjoyed all those sights. And the pretty young shoots of the willow, that we used to gather for Palm Sunday! Oh! we are all giddy thoughtless creatures, George, and do not half value the common blessings of life while we have them. I think sometimes of such things till my heart seems ready to burst; and then I remember poor father, how patient and contented he is; and I know how mother bears all her pains, and I remember that I have not much pain to bear; for I do not suffer now, except, to be sure, in my poor mind. I feel a great deal sometimes, George, — more than I like to talk about; and I think a great deal; and the time must come when you must think too. I know this is not the way for a young man to wear away his life; I know it all, and I do not mean to hold you to your word; only, as long as I can walk about and see the old places at all, I should like to walk with you, and see them with you.”

“Oh, Susan! you go near to break my heart when you talk so beautifully. But you know I wanted long ago that we should be married, and you know I am ready to work night and day to keep you; and there will be Master Mumford’s house at

liberty by the spring. I am ready and willing to do my best for you."

"No, George, it won't do ; such a poor helpless creature as I shall be by the spring must not think of taking care of a family. Hark how that robin is singing ! There is one comfort : I shall be able to hear the birds sing, and I shall know when the spring comes by hearing them ; and listening to their songs will put me in mind of all the pretty sights there are in spring time. I will tell you what is worst of all, George, — that I shall never be able to see the faces of those I love again. I cannot justly discern the favour of any one now ; that is what I miss most. I cannot be sure now when you look at me, except by a kind of guess. Oh, George ! sometimes I think how vain and foolish I used to be, and how much I prided myself upon looking pretty of a Sunday, when I thought I should meet you, and it all seems to me now to have been such vanity ; and I am sorry now I did not read my Bible more when I could read. It would be a comfort to me to have more texts by heart, to repeat to myself when I feel as sad as I often do."

They walked on in silence till they passed under a large holly which grew on the steep bank of the road. "Is not that the old holly from which we used to gather the branches to stick in our windows at Christmas ? I think it looks black against the sky."

"Yes, dear Susan, that is the very holly."

"Are there many red berries upon it this autumn ?"

"Yes, there's quite a sight of berries."

"I wish I could see them !—but that can't be. As I was saying George, about the Bible, — be sure you read a chapter every Sunday : it will do you good : as poor Mr. Sandford used to say, the Bible is the poor man's best friend. Poor Mr. Sandford ! I am sorry he is so bad. It would have been a good thing for me if he had been able to go about as usual, and to talk to me, and give me good advice. Perhaps I should never have been so pettish as I was for a little while ; but I have got over that now. He will be very much missed in the parish when he is gone ; but he is a great age, and we all must go when our time comes. The place won't seem like itself when he is in his grave, and 'Squire Mowbray in foreign parts ; for they say he is not coming back, but is going somewhere for

Miss Fanny's health, and to finish the young ladies' education, now Miss Alice is married. Poor Miss Alice! To be sure, how well I remember her wedding! and truly enough did I say I should never spend so happy a day again; but I did not think so when I said it. I thought I should spend many and many much happier days when I was married to you, George, for all I was so flighty that evening." And Susan smiled, and then sighed to think how light-hearted she had been.

"Ah, that was a happy day!" said George; and he shook his head sorrowfully, as he led poor Susan home to her father's cottage.

Each succeeding week saw Susan's blindness gradually increase; and as her sight became more and more dim, she became more than ever gentle and uncomplaining. Of all the visitations with which human nature is afflicted, none assuredly has such a tendency to calm, to purify, and to refine the heart, as blindness. The absence of all external objects to distract the attention, forces the soul to look back into itself, to subdue its passions, to control its emotions, to chasten all its feelings. It is seldom that the countenance of a blind person does not bear the stamp of a meek and resigned spirit within.

Old Mr. Sandford died, and was replaced by a worthy common-place clergyman, who did the duty in a respectable common-place manner; who attended the schools, and visited the poor people, and was sorry for the blind young woman; but, not having known her previously, took no particular interest in her case. Susan and her father lamented the death of Mr. Sandford. To them the loss of the voice to which they had been accustomed was a deprivation far greater than to others, for to them a voice was everything.

Susan was one day seated at her usual hour with her knitting by Nelly's side, when Mr. and Mrs. Otley paid the old woman a visit.

"Ah!" said Nelly, "I warrant me, they are coming for some job of their own. It's seldom any one opens my door to keep me company, or to cheer my lonesome days: that's the way of the world,—every one for himself." Then addressing Mrs. Otley as she entered: "Well, ma'am, and what queer new-fangled piece of work do you want to set me about now?"

"I have brought you a new pattern, Nelly," replied the good-humoured Mrs. Otley; "these knit boas are quite the fashion at Turnholme; and I thought if you got some done before they grow common, it would be such a good thing for you!"

"And can you tell me how I am to set about making such an out-of-the-way thing as this?" said Nelly, as she held up the boa with a disdainful air.

"No, I cannot tell you how to do it; but you are so clever at such matters, I thought you would know directly."

"Perhaps I may find out, as there are few stitches I do not know," replied Nelly, her temper a little soothed through the medium of her vanity; "but when I have made them, I do not see who there is to buy them, now Mrs. Mowbray and her family are gone."

"Oh! in the first place, I will take one; and then Miss Mincing will be glad to take any number, if you let her have them a trifle under the usual price."

Nelly nodded, with a half-pleased, half-cunning air, as if she had proved right, and Mrs. Otley had her own ends to answer in her apparent good-nature. "And, perhaps," continued Mrs. Otley, "the Mowbrays may be at home before next winter."

"No," said Nelly, "not a bit of it. That's all a pretence about the young ladies' education. They have had some losses out, there away, in them sugar-mines, and they won't be at home these two years," replied Nelly, with the dogmatical air of one whose superior information could not be doubted.

"That's sad news, Mrs. Nelly," interposed Mr. Otley; "'tis a wonder Mr. Williams did not say a word about it yesterday, when I called, about stocking up that hedge."

"The news only came this morning; but I believe you will find it's true enough; though people think an old woman can know nothing."

"I'm loth to credit such bad news about such good people," answered Mr. Otley.

"They may be good, for aught I know to the contrary; but I am sure it is little enough I have profited by their goodness."

"Oh, Nelly!" exclaimed Susan, "did not they keep you

always in employment ; and if you had nothing else to do, did they not bid you always be knitting stockings for them, which they afterwards gave to the poor ? ”

“ And much good that did me ! I was none the warmer. They paid me for my work, sure enough ; and what thanks do I owe them for that ? It would be a pretty thing indeed, if gentlefolks ordered goods of poor people, and then cheated them out of their money.”

“ Oh, Nelly ! ” cried Susan, and she longed to add, “ how ungrateful ! ” but she remembered she was old and sick, and she restrained herself.

“ I always thought it would come to this. I always thought the 'squire would run himself into debt with the warm house he kept, and his dances on the green to giddy boys and girls ; ” — (Susan sighed) — “ and then the grand company that visited at the Park ! I am sure it has kept me awake many a night to hear the carriages rolling by after a dinner-party. It won't do to burn the candle at both ends. I have always said so ; but nobody minds me.”

“ I am sure, Nelly,” interposed Mrs. Otley, “ Mr. Mowbray saw no more company than was proper and becoming for a gentleman of his birth and connexions : and it would have been a sin and a shame if he had let his daughters mope at home without allowing them to see a little of the world ; and as for his losses in his West India property, he could not foresee that his crop of sugar-canes would fail, or that a hurricane would ruin his plantations.”

“ I know nothing about sugar-canes, nor hurricanes, not I ; but I know that if they are things that pay one year, and don't pay the next, you should reckon accordingly, and not live as if sugar-mines paid every year as regular as sheep or corn.”

“ Not sugar-mines, Nelly. Sugar grows in plantations.”

“ Sugar-mines, or salt-mines, it is all one to me ; that's no business of mine,” replied Nelly doggedly, “ and it makes little difference to me. If them losses out, there away, hinder the 'squire's family from coming home, and I have no regular sale for my stockings, it matters little what keeps them in foreign parts.”

“ Well, Mrs. Nelly,” said Mr. Otley, “ you are not the only person who will miss Mr. and Mrs. Mowbray. All who

are willing to work will wish for the 'squire back again, and all who are sick or sorry, will miss Mrs. Mowbray's kind words, and kind deeds ; and I am sure I shall miss those sweet young ladies, with their smiling faces, and their affable manners, running about my yard, and playing with the dogs, and the cats, and the calves, and all the dumb animals."

" And I am sure I shall miss Mr. Mowbray's elegant manners and agreeable conversation, though I own it struck me there was something rather high about Mrs. Mowbray's ways, though she was such a dowdy in her dress. Well, Nelly, you do not seem to like the idea of knitting boas, so I will take away the pattern."

" And if I don't get employment from Miss Mincing, who am I to look to now ? — but if you are against leaving it with me for a day or two, why I don't wish to be beholden to anybody."

" I borrowed it on purpose from Mrs. Knotaway, and if you succeed in making them, I shall be very glad to buy one," added Mrs. Otley, as she took her leave.

Almost before the door was closed, " There," said Nelly, " I told you how it was. She thinks she can get her flaunting boa a trifle cheaper than if she bought it at Miss Mincing's. I know her well enough. People think I can't see through them, because I am old and helpless ; but I have not lost my senses."

" Indeed, Nelly," said Susan, " Mrs. Otley ordered one, out of good-nature."

" And do you think, if my work was dearer than the shop-price, she would think so much of being good-natured ?"

" Oh, Nelly ! we should not be looking out for bad motives to kind actions. It will be a great advantage to you to find a market for your goods at Miss Mincing's, and I am sure Mrs. Otley meant to do you a service ; and if it had not been for your good, Mr. Otley would never have let her propose it."

" Mr. Otley, indeed !" — He just lets his flighty wife take her own way."

" He is very kind ; but my cousin, Sophy Foster, who lived with them half-a-year, says he can be firm enough when there is need for it, and that he rules in all great things, though he does not like to be jarring about trifles."

“I don’t know how it is, Susan, you are always contradicting one. You always have something to say in defence of everybody. It is a very disagreeable trick in a young woman to be contradicting her elders.”

The spring had now stolen on ; Master Mumford’s house was free ; and Susan thought it her duty to tell George that she released him from his engagement. She was quite blind. No hope was held out to her of recovery. Her becoming the wife of a poor man, the mother of a poor man’s children, was absolutely out of the question. She took the opportunity one day, when her father and mother were both present, to say to him, “The time is come, George, when I must give you up. You have been very good to me, and I shall feel your goodness as long as I live ; but I cannot make you such a wife as a poor man ought to have : and now, George, here, before my father and mother, I give you back your word. The house next door is free, and you must give the ’squire’s steward your answer ; and so you had better go to Mr. Williams and give it up at once. I can never live there with you ; and if — if you should — if you should marry another girl, George,” she continued resolutely, though with a choking voice, “I could not bear to have her live there — no more could you, I am sure you could not ; so you had better go to the ’squire’s steward and tell him how it is !” She stopped, exhausted with the effort she had made.

George stood by, grieved, distressed, uncertain how to act, or what to say. He loved Susan dearly, as dearly as ever ; but it was true, she could not take care of a poor man’s house. He was but a labourer ; it was impossible he should earn enough to support her, and a person to do for her and the family they might have. It would be bringing her into a state of hopeless poverty and distress. He had no arguments to adduce, and yet he could not bear to break off his engagement. “What is to be done, dame ?” at length he said, with the tears in his eyes. “I love your Susan, there, as dearly as ever I did, and I can’t bear the thoughts of giving her up ; and yet I have nothing to say against the reasons she has been bringing up against me. I am fairly puzzled what to do,” he continued, rubbing his forehead. “I would not mind, if I thought I could keep her creditably ; but if she and her children were to be brought to want, and I not able

to earn a decent maintenance for them, why, I do think that would be worst of all."

"There is nothing to be done, dear George, but what I tell you. We must break off with one another, and you must try to forget by-gone days: that will soon be easy enough for you. As for me, I do not see there is any need for me to try to forget, for I may as well think over everything that is pleasant; and it will always be a pleasure to me to think how kind you have been to me, and how true you have been to me!" and she held out her hand in the direction where he stood, moving it slowly towards him as blind people do. He took her hand, he grasped it firmly; he pressed it between his own hard palms, occasionally patting it, in silence for some minutes, till at length he let it fall, and dropping his head upon the deal dresser, he burst into an agony of uncontrollable sobs.

CHAPTER V.

These orbs, that Heaven's gay light no longer know,
Nor meet with kindred beam affection's eye,
(Long, long denied each grateful ministry!)
Still own the tear that flows for others' woe!

Unpublished Poems.

SUSAN sat dissolved in silent tears. The dame had clasped her hands in prayer. Old Nicholas's head rested on his staff, while tears also rolled from his sightless eyes. It is not a new remark, but it is always a touching reflection, that eyes which have long forgotten to minister to pleasurable objects should still retain the faculty of weeping.

Few more words were spoken that evening by the party assembled in Master Foster's house. It was necessary that George Wells should decide whether he meant to take the neighbouring cottage. There was no alternative, and he was obliged to give it up. But he still continued to visit Susan.

The summer came on, and he often led her carefully forth to walk in their accustomed paths. He thought in his heart that he should never marry, and he was sure he could never like any girl as well as Susan. He sometimes told her so, and she

gladly believed him ; and she found herself, when thus convinced of his continued affection, less unhappy than she had imagined it possible to be under her melancholy deprivation. Her skill in knitting almost exceeded that of her old mistress ; and although she could not earn as much as she formerly had by needle-work, still the farmers' wives patronized her ; some of the gentry in the nearest country town bought her muffettees as fast as she could make them ; and she was able to assist her parents in some degree. The household cares fell heavier on old Sarah, but she had a willing spirit, and grudged no labour for those she loved.

One of Susan's most constant customers for her worsted manufactures was Mrs. Otley, who thought, in the absence of the Mowbrays, it was incumbent upon her to patronise their favourites. Though her husband rented but a small farm not exceeding a hundred acres, she was not, in her own estimation, a personage of small importance. She was possessed with that desire of aping her betters, which is the misfortune of many in her condition.

Because a man with a capital of ten or twelve thousand pounds chooses to invest that capital in a large farm, and consequently lives himself, and brings up his family, as he would be entitled to do if the same fortune was invested in any other speculation or profession ; why should the small farmer, who can barely stock his forty or fifty acres, and by the utmost industry ought not to expect a profit much beyond the earnings of a good labourer, think himself called upon to emulate his richer neighbour ? Like him he keeps his greyhounds to go coursing, or his nag to ride hunting ; while his wife and daughters appear at church attired in the extreme of the fashion, and at home display in their best parlour the elegancies of a drawing-room ; such as diminutive cupids bearing gigantic candlesticks, *petits objets* on a small table, a flower-glass containing an artificial bouquet, and not unfrequently a piano-forte. Farmer Otley himself was not one to whom these remarks were applicable, but he had married a woman who was the very type of a fashionable farmeress. She had received a boarding-school education, could play on the piano-forte, spoke French, wrote a delicate hand with a steel pen, embroidered muslin, was really a pretty and not a vulgar-looking woman, and having

brought him a decent fortune, felt herself entitled to be as refined as books and backboards could make her.

She had been struck by Mr. Otley's personal beauty, and had fallen in love with him as being more fitted by his appearance to enact the hero than any one else with whom she associated. He was certainly a singularly handsome man; and although (after marriage) she sometimes reproved him for allowing his voice to go beyond what she thought the true pitch of romance, and his laugh to become too hearty, she consoled herself by finding many examples in novels and poems, where strength, manliness, and courage are the requisite attributes of the lover, and the delicacy and refinement are only indispensable in the lady-love.

When she married him she imagined all farmers must move in the same sphere of gentility; and as Mr. Glover, who rented and cultivated highly a thousand acres in her native parish, drove his wife and daughters to church in a phaeton with too pretty ponies; as the Miss Glovers were dressed as well, or nearly as well, as the Lady Larkingtons; as Mrs. Glover frequently dined with the clergyman's wife, and Mr. Glover occasionally at Larkington Hall, she concluded that when she also was united to a farmer, Mrs. Otley would be as great and as genteel a personage as Mrs. Glover.

Much has been said, and much has been written, both against the farmers of the present day, and in their defence. Surely the condemnation and the approbation have both been too general. It is often urged that all the distress among that class of people is owing to their altered notions, their finery, and their ambition. It has also been urged with truth, that there is no reason why a large capitalist who invests his money in agricultural speculations should be condemned to eat bread and cheese, and to wear a smock-frock; and his wife to churn, bake, and feed her chickens.

The fault appears to be that sufficient regard is not paid to the difference of capital requisite for a large and a small farm. The small shop-keeper in a narrow alley does not feel himself called upon to make the same appearance, or to indulge in the same luxuries, as the proprietor of one of the brilliant magazines in Regent Street, or Bond Street; but the small farmer strives to vie with the large one, and would be ashamed to see

his family appear at church less well dressed, than that of a man whom he considers in the same rank of life as himself.

Dame Foster was, as usual, one afternoon sitting at her cottage window, whence she commanded a view down the village street, which enabled her to beguile the tedious hours by reporting to her blind companions each little village incident. She saw Mrs. Otley draw near, accompanied by her children, and a girl who attended upon them. Old Sarah could not help remarking that Mrs. Otley was more dressed out than ever Mrs. Mowbray used to be. "It is a pity folks do not know their own places. I remember the time when Mr. Otley's mother—old Mrs. Otley that's dead and gone—used to wear her black satin bonnet and her red cloak just as I did; only her cloak was handsomer, and the satin was a richer satin, and she was never forced to wear them till they were shabby. She looked respectable at all times; and she kept as warm a house as anybody in the parish—plenty for her own family and for anybody who was in want. When you were courting me, Nicholas, you used to work with old Farmer Otley, and I dare say, if you had gone on with him, you would not have married for some years longer. I don't justly mind how it was, but you and he came to words, and you went off to Farmer Lightfoot, and he did not board nor lodge his men; and I remember well you said 'twas all so different from old Mrs. Otley's comfortable hot suppers, and her good clean bed, and her warm fire-side to sit by of an evening, that you resolved you would have a home of your own, and you said it would not cost you much more to have a cottage to yourself than to hire a single room. Ah! it was all very well, and we got on pretty middling; but it was a good while before we gathered things comfortable about us. We often used to say that if we had waited another two or three years we should have begun quite beforehand with the world. Do you remember, Nicholas, how pleased we were when we got our nice clock at last? It was a hard matter to save up enough for the clock, with a growing family coming on!"

When old Sarah had advanced thus far in her reminiscences, she perceived that Mrs. Otley crossed the road and directed her steps to their cottage. She entered the humble apartment with a graceful slide, and her silk gown rustled, as Nicholas said, till he almost thought she must be the minister's lady. Her little boy

was dressed in a Polish coat, with a cap from which dangled a smart tassel. The little girl, who was just able to toddle, had a boa round her neck ; and the brawny country-girl who enacted nursery-maid, seemed to have been tutored into taking as mincing steps as her mistress. Mrs. Otley came to bespeak some handkerchiefs and muffettees like those which Mrs. Parkins, the oracle of fashion in the town of Turnholme, had ordered ; and she begged Mrs. Foster's permission to wait at her house till Mr. Otley passed by from market, and would drive her home in "his chaise," — a term which serves some people to designate every gradation of one-horsed vehicle, from a stanhope to a tax-cart.

It was not long before Mr. Otley was seen approaching in the market-cart, which Mrs. Otley denominated his chaise ; and she sent the girl to the garden-gate to stop him on his way. The goodnatured husband quickly dismounted from his cart, and entered the cottage, fearing something might be the matter. "Why, what's this, Lizzy ? You're not ill, to be sure ?"

"No, my love," answered the lady ; "only fatigued with my walk : but do not speak so loud, if you please, my love ; you forget my nerves."

"Lord bless you, Lizzy, I can't remember those things I know nothing about : but I am sorry you are so troubled with them. I am sure if they are a trouble to you, they are a trouble to me too ; for they won't let you do any of the jobs that want doing about a farmhouse. Why, what's this queer bit of a rat's tail you've twisted round little Lizzy's neck ?" he continued, laughing, as he held up the child's Lilliputian boa.

"Take care, dear Mr. Otley ; the poor child will take cold if she is without her boa. Mrs. Foster will think you quite a savage," she continued, in a mincing half-tender tone, to carry off his rough manners.

"No, no, she won't," he replied ! "Dame Foster knows me of old ; and Nicholas, he was the first that taught me how to take a wasp's nest. Do you remember, Nicholas ? You had left working for father then ; but you were always partial to me, and I remember well you used sometimes to come at after-hours, and help me wasp-nesting, or bat-fowling, or such like."

"Ah, Master Otley ! you were a smart sprig of a lad, and I always had a liking for you. You always were sharp and active ; and when you were quite a child, you would be helping your

poor mother when she was busy at her dairy, or her poultry-yard, or when she was particular busy on baking-days."

"There, Lizzy; you see I always told you how mother used to set her hand to everything, and never thought any useful work was beneath her. That's the way to make farming answer. 'Tis the small profits and the small savings we must look to, if we mean to get on in these hard times."

"Dear Mr. Otley, I do not like to hear you talk so. Anybody would think you quite mean and niggardly to hear you. I am often telling you you do not do yourself justice."

"Ah, wife! that's all very well; but it is just because I want to do myself justice that I talk so. But come along. Up with you into the cart, and we'll be jogging home. The more the merrier," he added, as he took the little girl in his arms.

"Oh, Mr. Otley! when will you get me a little pony-chaise, or something decent, to go about in? I have never been used to such a shabby conveyance."

"I am sorry for it, my dear! When I have the money, you shall have just such a chay as you may fancy; but meantime you must put up with this. Good night to you, Master Foster!" he continued, as he left the cottage. "Good night, dame! good night, Susan! I saw some rare fine worsted in a shop-window at Turnholme to-day. You shall have some, next time I go to market. I did think about bringing some to-day. It would be just the thing for your work."

"Thank you kindly, sir. You are very good," answered Susan.

"Well to be sure, she looks too much of a lady to be getting up into that common cart," remarked Sarah, as she watched Farmer Otley carefully assisting his wife into the "chaise," and dutifully saving the silk gown from coming into contact with the wheel. "There's no particular harm in the woman if she was married to some one who only wanted a wife to look at; but how she is to keep everything going about a farm, is more than I can tell! She needs somebody to look after her, instead of her being able to look after others. There's her veil flying, and her bit of fur that she calls a boa slipping off among the spokes of the wheel, and her smart shawl almost shaken off her shoulders as the cart rattles down the street. Now the wind takes her bonnet, and it is blown quite back! Old Mrs. Otley used to look so decent and respectable as she

came home from market by her husband's side, with her warm red cloak held tight round her, and her close black bonnet fitting to her face, it was a pleasure to see her. Well! after all, this young woman's a goodnatured soul, and gives you a good price for your work, Susan; and for all she is so fine herself, she is not proud nor haughty to others," added the kind-hearted Sarah; for though the habit of sitting at her window, watching all that took place in the village, and making her remarks and her calculations thereon, had unavoidably caused her to be something of a gossip, her heart was so good, that she always qualified any fault she might find with her neighbours, by discovering some counterbalancing merit.

It is almost impossible that those whose lives are passed in ministering to the mental cravings and the amusement of the infirm and the unoccupied, should avoid talking too freely of others. However amiable their intentions and their feelings may be, so many words cannot be uttered without sometimes doing mischief, if it were only by magnifying trifles into matters of importance.

CHAPTER VI.

When Love's afraid, do not that fear despise;
Flames tremble most, when they the highest rise.

D'Avenant.

GEORGE WELLS still took his Sunday walk with Susan; and Susan, having once told him distinctly that she should never marry, and that she gave him back his troth, having even alluded to the probability of his marrying another woman, felt she had done her duty, and that they might still be, and ever might remain, friends. But friendship between man and woman seldom exists without an admixture of love, past, present, or to come. The feeling that begins in friendship often leads on to love; often, too often, love is indulged under the garb of friendship; and sometimes, but more rarely, love leaves behind it a regard which subsides into friendship. Such, as Susan flattered herself, was the case with George; and she therefore hoped that she should always experience from

him the same kindness and the same attention. But it was not friendship, it was still love, that George felt for Susan : and it was a touching sight to mark the young man leading his once plighted wife, the blind Susan, on her way from church ; tenderly watching that the merry urchins who were playing in the path did not run against her in their sport, or carefully pushing aside with his foot any loose stone which might cause her to stumble. He would often bring her a nosegay too ; and Susan might generally be seen with a bowpot placed near her, containing the common flowers of the season, backed up with southern-wood and marjoram enough to drown the scent of all the roses and pinks of which the foreground was composed. George loved to see the smile with which his present was greeted ; and still looked with admiration at the silken eye-lashes which shaded the eyes that could no longer beam upon him.

The summer thus glided by ; the autumn was equally tranquil ; and Susan learned to listen for the accustomed step ; to know, without attending to the village chimes, the very hour at which he usually dropped in, and to recognise his hand upon the latch. But as the winter advanced, and the days became short and the weather severe, when they could no longer walk together in the fields, and that his visits were as much to the old people as to Susan, he did not call so regularly ; and Susan listened in vain for the sound of his step on the gravel, or the turn of his hand on the latch. In vain did she now count the hours and the quarters most accurately. The usual time had long elapsed when he did call, and sometimes he omitted to do so altogether. She could not wonder ; she told herself she ought to be grateful for all the kindness she had met with ; she was aware she had no right to reproach him, but yet she felt her sorrows more acutely than before.

Old Nicholas was the first to remark upon George's frequent absence. Some rumours had reached Susan's ears that George was not so steady as he had formerly been ; but she hastened to defend him and to account for the manner in which his time was occupied. Though she might feel hurt herself, it was painful to hear him blamed, and she dreaded hearing herself pitied.

" Why, is not that seven o'clock ? — five, six, seven, — yes, sure enough it is seven o'clock," said old Nicholas, one Sunday evening just after Christmas, — " and no George !

He was not here last Sunday neither. I am got so used to the young man, it seems quite dull when so many days go by without his giving us a call."

"Young men must take a little pleasure sometimes, father! 'Tis always the same thing here, and I dare say he likes a little change."

"That's quite true, Susan. I've been young in my day, and have had my pleasure; and Sarah, she has known what it is to be light-hearted; and we must not grudge young people what's natural at their age;" — then, after a little while, he added, "but you, my poor girl, trouble is come upon you before its time. It is all as it should be for us to bear our trials and wait patiently till it pleases God to take us; but you, not yet turned your two-and-twenty" —

"Don't pity me, father! that's just what I can't bear. I do very well when I'm not pitied," exclaimed Susan, with a little touch of her former petulance: "Thank you all the same, father, for thinking so much about me," she added, in a few moments, with a subdued manner. "But, hark! I hear his step! I know the sound of his nailed shoes on the gravel;" and her head was raised, and her face turned to the door, while a smile almost angelic in its sweetness played around her mouth. "I am glad you are come, George," she said, "for father missed you so much. Come in, and sit down by him, and tell him all the news."

This was just what suited George; for he felt conscious that he had been somewhat neglectful of late, and he found it easier to entertain old Nicholas with the village news, than to sit by Susan and explain to her how his evenings had been occupied.

"I heard plenty of news, and bad news too, at the Cart and Horses t'other night."

"Oh, George! you have not taken to going to the public-house, sure? You never used to do such a thing!"

"Bless you, Susan, a man can't work all day, and take no amusement when his work is over. What can a man do that has not got a home to go to?" This went to Susan's heart, but she said nothing. "As I was telling you, they said at the Cart and Horses — no, 'twas at the Chequers — Tuesday evening." —

"So he frequents both public-houses!" thought Susan.

George continued : " Master Smith said there was a talk of breaking up the benefit club."

" The benefit club!" exclaimed Sarah ; " why, what will my good man do if the benefit club should go ! His half-pay is almost all we have had to live upon for many a long year !"

" That will fall heavy upon us, indeed," said Nicholas. " Why, what's the meaning of this ? I never heard any talk of the club being so low."

" Why, they say the members are all growing old, and so many of them keep coming upon it that it can't hold out, unless they consent to take less pay."

" Ah !" cried Nicholas ; " I always was afraid how 'twould be, and I was very sorry to be such a burthen to it myself. That was why I agreed that, as my affliction was not like a common illness, of which one might hope to be cured, but as I must look for no other than being on the club as long as I lived, I would take only half-pay, walking-pay, as they call it. My two sons are very good, they always make up the money to me out of their earnings. I am sure I would not wish to be too covetous, and to break my club."

" I hope 'tis only talk : it will do well enough, I dare say, if we can get some new young members into it that are not likely to be any drain upon it yet. Well ! I have put in for four years, and never drawn a farthing yet."

" I am sure, George, you should be very grateful to think what a blessing God has granted you, in giving you such good health all these years."

" True enough, Susan : in that sense I should be glad never to have any of my money back again. And I am sure, Master Foster, I am glad enough to be in the club, and help to keep it going, if it is only for your sake."

" Thank you, George ; that's kindly said," answered Susan, while a tear trembled in her eye-lashes.

" Well, Master Foster," said George, " I must be going ; for I promised to meet Will Dixon at the Chequers this evening."

" Oh, George ! you are not going to pass your Sunday evening at the public-house !"

" Come, don't scold, Susan ; I promised to meet Will Dixon ; and though we want to have a bit of talk together, we need not make too free with the beer, you know : " and

George was gone. Susan remained with an indefinite sensation of uneasiness for which she could not satisfactorily have accounted to herself.

The following week they saw no more of George, neither did they on the Sunday ; but in the succeeding week he again called. The alarm concerning the benefit club seemed to have subsided : Nicholas's mind was set at ease upon the subject ; and Susan timidly asked George whether he and Will Dixon had had a merry bout of it at the Chequers.

"Come, come, Susan, you want to get me to tell tales out of school ! we drank no more beer than was good for us, and then I went home with Will Dixon to supper." Did these few words reassure Susan that George was not likely to fall into the habit of frequenting the ale-house, and did they consequently restore her mind to its usual tranquillity ? On the contrary, a sensation shot through her which she had hitherto been spared. She remembered that Will Dixon's sister Jane was a pretty girl with bright blue eyes, and one who had for a short time divided George's attentions with herself, before she had finally fixed them. She remembered thinking that Jane Dixon was very partial to George, and she remembered that the neighbours had joked Jane Dixon about wearing the willow. Jealousy for the first time darted through her heart, and she was alarmed and roused by the keenness of the pang. With the rapidity of lightning she pictured to herself George in love with Jane, — George, Jane's accepted lover, — George her bridegroom, — George her kind and affectionate husband ! It was with difficulty she could bear her part in the conversation, and her smile was sad and constrained.

"I do not think you seem right well, Susan. Are you ill, Susan ?" inquired George kindly and affectionately.

"No, thank you, dear George ; I am quite well — only I feel a little dull — I think 'tis the weather. Mother said she felt heavy this morning."

"Maybe it is. Jane Dixon was saying, Sunday, that this mild weather was not seasonable, and that she liked a good sharp frost, and a good long walk." Susan quivered as the name came from George's lips. But George was not yet in love with Jane, and no consciousness prevented his uttering the name freely. Susan had almost said, "So, you were walking with Jane Dixon, Sunday !" but she checked the

remark, mentally saying, "and why should he not walk with Jane? and why should he not marry Jane? Why should I fret? I ought to hope Jane may draw him away from idle companions and bad company. I fretted when I thought he was taking to such courses; surely I ought to be glad if anybody else gets the power I have lost to lure him from evil ways. Poor fellow! he would never have thought of such things if I had not been afflicted as I am. If he had married, and had a comfortable home, he would have gone on being steady. Yes, I ought to hope he may marry Jane Dixon, and make her a good husband." But, school herself as she would, she did fret; and all the placidity of mind which she had laboured to acquire was gone. Night and day did she think of George and Jane, and constantly did she fancy them walking through the same lanes, strolling up the same field-paths, loitering along the same head-lands, where she had so often wandered with George. Long before such things did occur, had she imagined them. But in the course of a few months, that which her reason wished, but her feelings dreaded, came to pass. George's visits became more and more rare; and when he did look in, Jane Dixon's name was never breathed.

There was an awkwardness in his manner, and he almost exclusively addressed himself to Nicholas. Susan was all gentleness, and invariably, when he took leave, thanked him for calling, in a subdued manner, which showed how entirely she felt it was from motives of charity, and not from preference, that he now visited them. George, without decyphering what caused the change in her tone, was aware that she read his mind, and he became ill at ease in her presence.

Jane Dixon had originally liked George; and now that he was free again, and that Susan Foster had, as it was well known, refused to marry him, she saw no reason why she should not put forth all her store of rustic allurements to win back her first love. George was by nature steady and domestic: he had for two years been engaged to Susan, and had therefore been in the habit of considering a wife, a family, a home, as the enjoyments to which a poor man should look forward; and although he had latterly been led to mix more with companions of loose character, though he had loitered away many an evening at bowls or in the ale-house, he was not happy while leading such a life. At first, it was for the loss of Susan

herself that he grieved ; but in time his regrets became less sentimental. He pined for a fire-side of his own, his own chimney-nook, his hot rasher of bacon for supper, and the kind attentions of a wife, even though that wife were not Susan Foster. He was in a state of mind which laid him peculiarly open to such attractions as Jane Dixon possessed ; a tolerable share of beauty, extreme good-humour, and, above all, a very decided predilection for him, which she was at no pains to conceal. No wonder, then, if after two years of hopeless attendance upon poor Susan, he should now find himself engaged to Jane Dixon, and that the only difficulty which remained, was to break the event to Susan.

Every time George entered their cottage, to bid them a hurrying good morning, or to wish them a hasty good-night, Susan thought the moment was arrived when he was going to announce to them the step he had taken ;—for she felt that he would not allow them to learn it only from common report ; and she judged rightly. Once, or twice, after having wished them good night, he had lingered with his hand upon the latch of the door, or had returned to ask some trifling question, and then had hurried suddenly away. Each time she felt that the decisive moment was come, and she worked herself up to receive the intelligence as she ought. She thought she wished it over, and her mind at rest ; and yet she felt relieved when the door was closed, and she heard his step receding along the little gravel path, and she might still think of him as her George, and not as the promised husband of another.

CHAPTER VII.

Behold the herbage rich, in pride of June,
 Franked with gay flowrets dancing merrily
 Beneath the sunbeams of the sultry noon,
 While slumbering in their cells their perfumes lie.
 But when the scythe sweeps on right sturdily,
 Laying their sweet heads low, their spirits fling
 Pure incense on the breeze ere yet they die ;
 So doth the chastening hand of sorrow bring
 Virtues and graces forth, by joy left slumbering.

Unpublished Poems.

It was rather more than two years from Alice Mowbray's wedding-day, when George Wells lifted the latch of Master

Foster's door, and, closing it after him, walked into the house, seated himself on the polished wooden chair opposite old Sarah's, and said in a hurried voice, "I am come, neighbours, — I am come to tell you a piece of news which I should be loth you should hear from anybody but myself."

Susan's heart died away within her—her head drooped more than ever over her knitting; Dame Foster took off her spectacles, and, wiping them, laid them within the sacred book from which she had been reading some texts to her husband and her child; old Nicholas half turned himself upon his settle: but none spoke. Susan felt that the silence must be distressing to George; and exerting herself the first, she replied, "If it is any news, George, that concerns yourself, you may be sure there are no friends who will be more rejoiced to hear of any good likely to befall you, or more grieved to hear of any misfortune. You have scarce any older friends than father, and mother, and myself; so you need not be afraid to speak."

"Thank you, Susan, thank you; that's just like you. I was sure you would take it so. And yet, after all that has passed between us, I felt — I don't know how I felt. But it seems strange I should marry anybody else."

"I gave you back your word, George, and this is what I have long expected; and long tried to make up my mind to," she added, with some effort. "I could not expect you to go on always tending upon a poor blind girl like me. 'Tis better, much better, than getting any ways unsteady. God knows, I have not a word to say against your marrying Jane Dixon."

"Thank you, Susan, thank you," he repeated; "I feel easier now! Susan, this has been a great trouble to me; for I could not bear deceiving you like, and yet I did not know how to tell you there was any courting going on between me and Jane."

"You know, George, I gave you back your word from the first."

"Yes, yes, so you did; but for a long time I did not believe I should ever think of any girl but you: but I do not know how it is, a man wants a home — does he not, Master Foster? — and he wants a wife to see to him. And then, Jane Dixon, she's a tight lass; and I don't know how it was,

I never came home from work without meeting her going of an errand somewhere; and then she is a bustling girl, and one who will keep things nice and tidy in a poor man's house."

"Her mother was a thrifty, bustling body, and I hope she will make you a good wife, George," said Dame Foster, in a tone which she meant should be very kind; but her thoughts were so much occupied with Susan, that she had no feeling to spare for any one else.

"I wish you happiness, George," said Nicholas; "you have behaved very well by my poor girl; and, if it had not been for her affliction, you would have married her, and made her a good husband, I warrant. It is the will of God it should all be as it is."

"Thank you kindly, Master Foster."

Meanwhile Susan had been feeling upon the little shelf on the wall close to where she sat, for a small book, which at length she found. "George," she said, "I have a book here which I ought to give you back. 'Tis those Watts's Hymns which you gave to me a few days before Miss Alice's wedding;" she could not repress a sigh. "If you remember, you wrote both our Christian names upon it, — and then said you would add the surname when one name would do for both. I don't think it is right I should keep that book, and you the husband of another; and yet I could never find it in my heart to destroy it. Besides, I can't read all the beautiful hymns that are in it; but you can, and sometimes it may do you good perhaps to read them."

George indeed remembered giving Susan the little book: he had that day obtained the promise of Master Mumford's house, and he had that day gained her consent to their being speedily asked in church. They had then written their names in the manner described by Susan, and had talked over their future prospects, with the assurance of soon being indissolubly united.

As George took the book from Susan's hands, he felt them tremble. He was scarcely more composed himself. The appearance of the little volume, the sight of the writing, annihilated for a moment the intervening two years; and he saw Susan as she then stood beside him, radiant with health, joy, and tenderness.

Jane Dixon would not have been pleased had she known with what pain he received this present, with what regret he looked back upon the image thus conjured up to his mind. The tears were in his eyes as he held it. "If it is not right for you to keep the book, Susan, I do not think it is right I should ; for I am sure I shall never look upon it without wishing, — without remembering —— Oh ! Susan, how happy we were when I gave you that book !" His voice broke, and he passed the back of his hand several times over his eyes.

Strong emotion in a stout and sturdy peasant, whose feelings we are sure are thoroughly genuine, and in which we are satisfied there is no touch of sickly, morbid sensibility, is always an affecting subject of contemplation. It was almost too much for old Sarah, who now wept like a child ; while Susan experienced among the poignant regrets which overpowered her, a mixture of satisfaction to find she was so tenderly recollected. "I did not think you would have minded it, George ; but if it makes you think too much of by-gone days, why, perhaps, 'twill be best you should give the book to mother to keep. I would not wish you to think any more about me now ; it would be no ways right." But it was a comfort to Susan, though she was not aware of it, that she had to tell him not to think about her.

George still held the book, awkwardly shifting it from hand to hand : at length he held it out ; "Take it, dame," he said, "take it ; for I'm going to be married to Jane Dixon, and I must not think any more about Susan, nor about the days that are passed and gone ; it won't do," and he pushed the book towards Dame Foster, and abruptly opened the door. "God bless you, George," and Susan held out her hand. He had closed the latch, and was gone. Her hand dropped to her side, but she was not mortified. She scarcely knew how it was that she felt so much less miserable than she expected she would have done, when George was about to be married to another, — when an eternal barrier was about to be placed between them, — when she had broken the last link that bound them to each other. Alas ! it must be confessed that if the causes of her more resigned frame of mind were accurately analyzed, there might be discovered, among better feelings, a slight admixture of vanity, which had been soothed by finding George

still remembered her with affection, and by feeling that he did not love Jane Dixon so well as he had once loved her.

Susan was a good and a generous girl; but in her nature there was a portion of that quality which, although subdued and chastened by heavy affliction, is seldom entirely rooted out of the human heart. She did not wish George to be unhappy on her account; she heartily hoped Jane would prove a good wife to him; and yet, after having experienced considerable mortification in the course of his unavoidable neglect of her, it was a balm to poor frail human nature to feel that she was not relinquished without a pang.

“My poor girl,” said Sarah, after she had watched George’s hurried steps along the road, over the stile, and into the fields beyond the village,—“my poor girl! I must no longer pray, as I have done, never to see another sun rise when once my poor Nicholas is in his grave, for what will you do without me? As long as George was single, I felt you would never want a friend; but now I must hope to be spared still for your sake! I once thought, when you were George’s wife, and my good man was at rest, that old Sarah Foster’s task would be finished, and that she might pray the Almighty to release her from these pains. But God’s will be done!” and she bowed her head in meek submission.

George Wells had instinctively avoided the village; he dreaded to meet his betrothed. Susan had risen up to his mind as she had been in her best days: those days once more became so present to him, that all his former love seemed to return with fresh force, and he wondered how he had become entangled with Jane Dixon. But a few weeks more, and she would be his wife; and among the lower orders that name is more sacred than among the higher, where the gradations between virtue and vice are softened down, and the line of demarcation not so absolute. He remembered that he had promised to walk with Jane that very evening, and he somewhat slowly and unwillingly returned towards the village by a path which led nearer the dwelling of his new love. He had not advanced far when he met her gaily approaching in search of him. He was scarcely yet in a frame of mind to meet her gladly, and he wished she had not been quite so affectionate in her disposition towards him. She certainly was not coy. He had never been called upon to sue; he had but to receive the

advances she was disposed to make. "Poor girl!" he thought, "it is not her fault, if I once liked Susan so much. She has always been partial to me: I must make her a good husband. It would never do to be anywise unkind to her now; besides, the parish begins to talk, and the best thing we can do is to be married out of hand." And the result was that they agreed he should wait on the minister, and inform him they wished to be asked in church.

CHAPTER VIII.

Let fowk bode weel, and strive to do their best,
Nae mair's required; let Heav'n make out the rest.

ALLAN RAMSAY'S *Gentle Shepherd*.

SUSAN was somewhat agitated and perplexed the next Sunday morning, debating in her own mind whether George and Jane were likely to be asked that very day, and whether she could hear their names called over with the composure which befitted so holy a place. She did not like to absent herself from church on that account; for to those who have acquired the habit of never failing in their attendance, the omission appears a dereliction of duty. She therefore summoned up her courage; her mother, as usual, arranged her bonnet, and pinned her shawl with due attention to neatness. The dame, as usual, turned the key of the door, and placed it in her pocket; then, taking Nicholas's arm with one hand, she guided him safely on his way, while with the other she supported her own feeble steps with her polished staff. Susan followed, led by a neighbour's little girl, who always came to attend her to church.

This afflicted family, so decent in their apparel, so respectable in their behaviour, were never seen drawing near the house of worship without exciting a feeling of pity and veneration in all whose souls were not callous to every good emotion. They had arranged themselves as usual in their pew. The service had begun; and when the close of the second lesson drew near, poor Susan's heart beat almost audibly. Her head was held low, and her face was partly concealed by her bonnet: but she strove to maintain as unmoved a countenance

as possible ; for she knew that the opposite seat was occupied by gay young girls who would feel a curiosity about her, and she was unable to tell when, or when not, her countenance might be the subject of remark to others.

The last words of the lesson were read ; the large Bible was closed with a heavy noise ; there was a moment's pause, but the clergyman proceeded with the service, and Susan was spared for that Sunday. A sort of hope shot through her mind ; and yet what did she hope ? She had herself relinquished George, she had herself anticipated his marriage, she knew he was engaged, she knew he could not with honour break off with Jane Dixon ; if he did, was not she as unfit for a poor labourer's wife as when she first gave him back his troth ? It was all so, and yet she felt relieved.

The following Sunday she was again seated in her accustomed place, and she again listened as the clergyman read the service. This time the names were read, — “ George Wells, bachelor, and Jane Dixon, spinster, both of this parish.” The girls opposite might have seen her lips quiver ; and the hands which were habitually meekly clasped upon her knee, were slightly raised, and fell again immediately.

That day Sarah herself led Susan from church, and gave up the guidance of Nicholas to the little girl. They reached their home ; and before old Sarah busied herself in the preparation for their humble repast, she sat down to rest herself. Susan heard her mother sigh.

“ Mother ! ” she said, “ you are fretting about me ! ”

“ Not to say fretting, Susan, for we heard no more than what we expected to hear ; but I thought it was a great trial to you to hear their names in church. I was afraid whether it might not be almost too much for you. And then I sighed to think, when we were gone, what a poor desolate creature you would be ; and I was wishing we could any way provide for you. I should not like you to come on the parish, and yet I don't see how we can save any thing, — we, that can't earn a shilling. Next time Farmer Otley calls, I will ask him about the Friendly Society he was mentioning ; and I have heard talk of insuring one life against another, and perhaps we might get your brothers to help,” continued the old woman, her thoughts gradually led from the wound Susan's affections had received, to the blasting of her worldly prospects.

When, as among the lower orders, the provision necessary for existence is at stake, the most tender regrets must often be mixed up with other considerations ; but Susan could not yet comprehend any sorrow but that of losing the lover of her youth. "Never trouble your head about me in that way, mother ; I don't care nor think anything about such matters."

"That's all very well for young folks who have always had their fathers' roof over their heads," interposed Nicholas, "and a bit to eat as long as their parents had it ; but it is the duty of parents to look forward for their children. You will find it very different when we are in our graves, and you have to find yourself board and lodging and everything. It frets me so, sometimes, I can't go to sleep ! I and my old woman used often to say we should be at rest when we were beneath the sod, and we did not care how soon our time came ; but now I quite dread to think we may be taken any day."

"And so may I, father, be taken any day. It often happens that the youngest goes first ; and as 'tis all in the hands of Providence, there is no need for you to make yourself unhappy about me in that way. Besides, who knows but God may raise me up friends if my time of need should ever come?—It is not my board nor my lodging that troubles me," she could not help adding with an irrepressible expression of grief.

"Ah ! I know what 'tis that troubles you. 'Tis just what I am often thinking of. In my affliction I have a kind help-mate to cheer me, and keep up my spirits, and save me from ever feeling lonesome ; and I have you, Susan, and I love to listen to your voice, though it has not its cheerful tone, and though I never hear the laugh that used to make my heart glad within me. You, my poor girl, you can never have these comforts, and that weighs upon my mind, though I do not like to say much about it."

"It can't be helped, father, and I hope I submit as I should. It has pleased God to visit me as He has done, and I am sure I have done no more than my duty in not letting George burthen himself with me for a wife."

"Yes, yes, it is all right ; you have done your duty, that's certain."

"And when we have done that, we must leave the rest to Providence."

Mr. Otley called soon afterwards with some of the worsted which he was now in the constant habit of procuring for Susan. Dame Foster took the opportunity of getting her mind enlightened concerning annuities, and friendly societies, and all the other modes of provision for the poor which were established at Turnholme. But all required a larger monthly sum, or a more considerable desposit, than they could possibly contrive to pay. "I wish, Mr. Otley," said Susan, "you could persuade father and mother not to think so much about me; if 'tis anything about themselves, they always say we should rely on Providence: tell them they should do so for me, as well as for themselves."

"It is quite right, Susan, you should speak as you do, and feel as you do; but it is quite right too that your parents should be willing to do the best they can for you. I am sure I wish I could put them in the way of making some provision for you; but when people get to be in years, all the insurances are so high: that is a thing people should think of when they are young and in health."

"That is quite just, Master Otley, and so I did when I was young; for I put into my club as soon as I was turned nineteen,—as soon as I got anything like man's wages; and a good job it has been for me that I did so: but, you see, one could not reckon upon such an affliction as poor Susan's."

"And that's quite just too, Master Foster; and I'll be bound that if ever she should be in want, the gentry, ay, and the farmers too, would not grudge her some help,—such a good girl, and such a patient girl as she is! and so young too, and so well-favoured as she is! I often tell my mistress I don't care how many warm handkerchiefs she buys of Susan, 'tis all money well spent; though I will say I wish she would not always be making me drive her over to Turnholme, that she may learn the new fashions. What do the fashions signify? say I; where is your red cloak? say I; and where is your checked apron? say I: and then she is so mad with me! But she is a good-natured soul, and always comes round after I've laughed a bit. And then then she is not so hearty and strong as I am, and she can't bustle about. Well, good night, Nicholas! I must be off. I must not forget this package though: Miss Mincing, at the shop, told me I must be sure and carry it very carefully, for the least touch would spoil it." And

away went the good-natured farmer, carrying the parcel very carefully to the cart, but then putting it at the bottom of the vehicle among many other articles of great size and weight, where it was jumbled in a manner which would have agonised Miss Mincing had she witnessed it, and which did agonise Mrs. Otley when she extracted it from among its travelling companions, and upon examination found the beautiful cap, with its wires, and its bows, more fit to adorn a May-day chimney-sweeper, than the head of so refined a lady as she was.

"Oh, Mr. Otley, how could you!" she exclaimed, in an accusing voice to her husband.

"How could I do what, Lizzy, dear?"

"Look at my cap!" she said; "I am sure Miss Mincing must have told you to take care of it."

"So I did, Lizzy; I held it up between my finger and thumb, as tenderly as if it was a plum with the bloom on it, till I laid it quite light at the top of everything else in the cart."

"And then you went rattling away as hard as you could drive, without once looking behind you to see how all the articles rode in the chaise! I do think you must have been a little too gay at market, Mr. Otley," she said, in a small voice; "you must have made a little too free with some of your coarse drinking companions:" and she drew herself up.

"Not a bit of it, Lizzy; none of your insinuations! I just wetted my bargain, as everybody should, and that was all. I'm sorry your cap is tumbled."

"Crushed, spoiled, *abœmy*," (query *abômé*?) "as Miss Mincing says."

"But I'll tell you what: it is a sort of a flashy thing I can't abide, and I had rather by half see you in such a cap as old Dame Foster wears."

"My love, you are quite uncivil: you have quite lost your manners. I am sure you are saying what you do not think, and I am sure that all the while you like to see your wife look neat and genteel."

"Neat, I do, and neatness is gentility enough for me. Come, I'll buy you a new cap after my own fashion; and then if you take half the bows, and all the flowers, off this queer thing," and he held the cap up aloft, dangling by one of its strings, "you will have two decent caps, instead of one out-of-the-way concern."

"You have no taste, dear Mr. Otley!" said poor Mrs. Otley, as she pinched, and pulled, and tried to squeeze the unfortunate cap into its pristine shape. Mr. Otley watched her as she put her head first on this side, then on that, looking distressfully on the cap, and every now and then giving it a masterly twitch.

"Now, what puzzles me, Lizzy, is, when you look to wearing this cap: you can't go to church in it, and you can't drive out in the cart in it; and hang me if I know when you mean to put it on."

"Surely, Mr. Otley, every woman should have something decent to wear if visitors should come."

"I'm sure Farmer Dobson will never know what sort of a cap you have on your head, and Mr. Higgins is quite a plain sort of a man; and 'tis but seldom they call in, except just in the way of business."

"But Mr. Dobson has a wife, and daughters too," answered Mrs. Otley triumphantly; "and Mrs. Higgins's lace-veil, last Sunday, was quite the talk of the whole church. I am sure I heard of it three times before I could get down the churchyard and into our chaise; and I saw all the bonnets moving in all the pews as she came up the aisle with her beautiful veil hanging down almost to her knees."

Mr. Otley had nothing to reply, and Mrs. Otley remained in possession of the field.

CHAPTER IX.

Cancel all our vows;
And, when we meet at any time again,
Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain.

MICHAEL DRAYTON.

GEORGE WELLS and Jane Dixon had been asked for the last time, and the wedding was fixed for the Wednesday following. George Wells had not again visited the family of the Fosters. His mind was more at ease since he had spoken to Susan; but he found that the sight of her meek countenance, the sound of her gentle voice, and the recollection of former days, unsettled him. Neither did Susan desire that

he should call any more. She was never again to consider him but as the husband of another, and she wished for time to accustom herself to this idea before she again heard his voice: she wished to school and calm her feelings, so as to be sure her heart would not beat when she heard his step and recognised his hand upon the latch.

The sun rose in the full effulgence of a September morning, and all seemed gay in the village of Overhurst: the children were all sporting in and out of every cottage-door: the bells began to ring a merry peal while the Fosters were yet at breakfast; and Betsey Smith, who was Jane's particular friend, was seen by old Sarah, in her white gown and her new shawl and ribands, carefully picking her way across the road, as she came from her home, in the outskirts of the parish, to join the rest of the party at the Dixons. Susan and her father did not see the bridesmaid in her gala dress; but they heard the merry chimes of the bells, and Susan with difficulty swallowed the cup of tea her mother had prepared for her. The chime of church bells is of all sounds that which conveys the most melancholy, or the most joyous impressions to the heart, according to the circumstances under which it is heard, and the associations with which it is connected. If the feelings are not in accordance with their peal, there is no sound so unutterably, so unaccountably sad as that of a merry chime. It may well be imagined that to Susan, that morning, it was more sad than a funereal toll, and it was a relief when the ringers relaxed from their exertions. Dame Foster's eyes were frequently turned upon her daughter with increased tenderness.

The countenances of the mother and of the daughter formed a singular contrast. The old woman, who bore her bodily sufferings without uttering a complaint,—who never allowed her voice to fall into a cadence, which could express pain, or peevishness, or vexation, lest she should grieve the two objects of her love,—had, from the knowledge that they could not read her looks, allowed her features to set themselves into a form expressive of intense agony, and constant anxiety. Those of the daughter, on the contrary, who was aware that her feelings might be the subject of observation to others if suffered to show themselves on her face, seldom, if ever, varied in their placidity. She knew not when her mother might be

gazing upon her ; and, from the fear of grieving her, she had learned to wear a gentle smile, whatever might be her mental sufferings.

The village noises gradually subsided. Susan felt that the wedding had drawn off the idle children and the village loungers in another direction. Neither Nicholas nor Sarah spoke. There was no sound except the incessant and buzzing hum of the autumn flies in the sunny window.

“ It is a beautiful day, is not it, mother ? ” at length inquired Susan.

“ Yes, my dear ; a beautiful sunshiny day,” answered the dame, with a deep-drawn sigh.

“ I thought it was, for the flies buzz so. I am glad of it. It is a pity when a wedding comes on a bad day. I hope ’tis a good omen for poor George ! ”

“ I have heard say, that the duller the day, the brighter the marriage ; not but what I wish well to George and his wife.”

“ It would be very wrong in us not to pray for his happiness, mother ; for I have not a word to say against his behaviour to me from first to last.”

“ Jane Dixon is a lucky girl. He’s sure to make a good husband, for he has good principles.”

“ And he her first lover and all, too ! ” replied Susan. “ She *is* a lucky girl ! I used to feel sorry for her, when first George slighted her for me ; for I saw she did not laugh and joke with him as she did with the other men. Now ’tis her turn to be sorry for me, and perhaps she is, though she has given up calling to see me almost ever since I have been afflicted. But it was not to be wondered at, when she began to think of George again. That was one thing made me almost sure what would come to pass at last.”

“ Why, ’twas to be expected that things should fall out much as they have done. But I do not know how it was, when I found George seem so attentive and so constant for such a long time, I thought, mayhap, he would always go on as he did then. I believe it is the way with parents, they can’t help fancying their own children something beyond other people’s ; and so I began to count George would never be looking out for any body else. However, ’tis my belief he will never love Jane Dixon, as he has loved my Susan.”

“ If he does not yet, mother, he will soon. George will be sure to love his wife, and he will grow to love her better and better every day, and then he will quite forget me ; but that is all as it should be. Do you think, mother, I shall ever forget him ? I mean to try hard to do so ; and I don’t mean to talk over what has gone before, even with you, mother ; and then do you think at last, mother, I shall quite forget to think of him, except as a friend ? ”

“ I hope you may, my child ; but it is always harder for a woman to forget than it is for a man : and ’tis harder still for you, who have nothing to draw off your mind. I have often heard old folks say, that scarce anybody marries their first love ; and, if that is true, many and many must have got over such things. But I can’t justly say myself, for I never kept company with anybody but your father, and we have been married so long that I can’t frame to myself a notion of anything but being his wife.”

Susan sighed. “ And that’s just what I used to feel about George ; and I always thought he and I should be just such another couple as you and father.”

Susan had indulged herself in thinking and speaking of George as her lover till the images of the past had usurped the place of the realities of the present. The growing hum of voices struck her quick ear. The village was all alive again. The shouts of children and the steps of passers-by recalled her to herself, and painfully dispelled the recollections which had taken possession of her mind. It was over, and he was now the husband of another ; and she felt wicked in having given way to such thoughts.

“ Mother, we must not say any more : the time is come when it is not enough for me to put a guard upon my words and my actions ; I must now set a watch over my thoughts. I do not often talk as I have done to-day ; and I felt as if it would do me good to speak of him once more : — but there’s an end now.”

Towards the afternoon the bridal party paraded the humble street, as is the custom among the peasantry. The bride and bridegroom, and the bride’s-maids and bride’s-men, dressed in their holiday apparel, and paired for the day, perambulated the most frequented parts of Overhurst ; the laughing blushing bride received the hearty, if not refined, congratulations of

her neighbours ; and, probably, among some of the wedding guests the foundations were laid for another festival of the same kind.

George had as much as possible curtailed the usual march of the little procession, and had contrived that only once did they pass before Master Foster's cottage. He was ashamed on his wedding-day to say he wished to avoid that part of the village, and yet his heart sunk within him as he approached it. He almost rejoiced for a moment that Susan could not *see* the merry troop ; and, as he passed, he dared not raise his eyes in that direction.

Many remarked that day, that Jane was all joy and smiles as would have befitted the bridegroom, while George's down-cast looks would better have suited the bride.

Dame Foster was at her window, and saw the party advancing. Susan heard them almost before her mother perceived them, and inquired if the wedding procession was not passing. Her mother answered in the affirmative ; and could not help adding, that she had not believed George would have been so unfeeling.

“ Do you see him, mother ? ”

“ Yes, there he is, Susan, sure enough ! ”

“ Oh, mother, how does he look ? I gave him a handkerchief two years ago last summer, and he said he should keep it for his wedding-day. He has not got that on, sure ? ”

“ 'Tis a checked brown and yellow he wears round his neck.”

“ No ! 'twas a spotted blue I gave him.”

“ Poor fellow ! ” exclaimed the dame, in a more kindly tone ; “ he holds down his head, and now he looks the other way, — quite away from his bride, up the hill. Poor fellow ! he can't bear to turn this way after all. I'll be bound he does feel it ! ”

“ Jane must know all that has been between him and me,” said Susan with some bitterness ; “ and I do think she need not have led him this way neither ! But I am glad you have seen him, mother. I like to know how he looks ; for I may still wish him well.” Susan's fingers resumed their knitting, and the dame proceeded with her darning.

George would have silenced their merriment had he had the presence of mind to do so ; but a peasant bridegroom is of all

creatures the most awkward, the most shame-faced : far from bearing himself as the man who has won the prize he sought, he has the air of one who has been fairly caught in the snare, and has no longer a chance of escape.

George, however, felt it impossible to again march, as it were in triumph, by Susan's door ; he led Jane the back way into the village : it was nearly the same path he had taken the day he had told Susan of his marriage : and it is to be feared that Jane did not find her George the more gay or the more tender for being removed from the observation of others. Presently the sounds of gay voices once more grew upon the ear as the party returned on their steps.

Dame Foster again put down her spectacles, and gazed through the window : " God bless him ! " she exclaimed ; " he could not stand it again, and he is not with the rest."

" Not gone away and left Jane ? " inquired Susan in a tone of alarm,—" that would not be right."

" No, no, she's gone too. I warrant me, they've taken the back way round to Master Dixon's, and I like him all the better." The dame felt more in charity with him than she had done a few minutes before ; and Susan was gratified, and yet grieved, that George should not be thoroughly happy. " He will be so soon ! " she thought, however ; — and so he was.

He enjoyed the comforts of a tidy home, a blazing fire, a warm supper, and a smiling wife to greet him on his return from work. His days were occupied in his accustomed labour ; his after-hours were filled up by cultivating his garden ; and the helpmate who received him kindly, and provided him with comforts, became daily more endeared to him. The birth of a child gave him a fresh object of interest, and George was a happy man.

Susan also was calm, if not happy. He was another woman's husband—he was a married man—and all was over for her. The barrier was so entirely insuperable that her feelings did change, that she did learn to think of him, merely as of a kind friend, and that the past did at length appear to her only as a dream.

CHAPTER X.

And now, their wanderings o'er,
 They, 'mid embowering trees, desery their home once more.
 Home, thrilling sound ! To the time-sobred breast,
 Thronged with remembrances, not sweet alone
 But sacred, and with sadder thoughts imprest
 Of cherished sorrows, and dear hopes o'erthrown ;
 While to young hearts, that yet have only known
 The hey-day joys, and buoyancy of spring,
 It speaks of happiness again their own :
 Of throbbing bosoms, bright eyes glistening,
 And laughter's merry peal, that through the hall shall ring.
Unpublished Poems.

THREE years had elapsed since the Mowbrays had left Overhurst, and all the parish was now joyfully expecting their return. Again the village bells rang a joyful peal, again the village children shouted, and all was animation in Overhurst and at the Park.

Susan was the first to hear the carriage-wheels. "Yes, sure enough, here they are!" said her mother; "three carriages full: and such a load, and the horses so jaded, poor things! And there's Mrs. Mowbray nodding as she goes along; and there's Miss Fanny—no—why, I declare if it is not Miss Emma, with her head quite out of the window. Well, I'm glad enough to see them all come home again. And there's the 'squire on the box; he turns round to speak to Mrs. Mowbray; he looks hearty still. And there is such a queer foreigner behind, with such black whiskers. And sure that can never be Jenny Simpson? Her very face seems Frenchified! I'll be bound her own mother will hardly know Jenny when she sees her." Not long afterwards the dame's eyes were again attracted to the window. "Why, sure, there can't be another carriage full of them! Why, if it is not Captain and Mrs. Harcourt! And there is the baby! May the Lord bless them all! It will be a happy evening at Overhurst Park!" And Dame Foster sighed while she rejoiced in their happiness.

And heartfelt joy and social gaiety did reign in Overhurst Park. The delight of finding themselves again in Old England, the joy of meeting after a long separation, the raptures of Mrs. Mowbray over her first grandchild, the pleasure of visiting their old haunts, occupied the ladies for the first day

or two ; but Mr. Mowbray had been looking about him, and had made himself acquainted with all the village gossip.

On the third day after their return, he bustled into the drawing-room, where his wife and daughters were eagerly displaying to Alice and Captain Harcourt their relics from the various places they had visited in their travels, and were explaining the exact point of view from which such a drawing had been made, or directing their attention to an invisible dot in a pencil sketch, which stood for 'imperial Rome' in the distance, or helping out by descriptions *vivâ voce* the tints which did not express the roseate hues of evening upon the glaciers.

"I do not know what all the pretty women in the parish have been thinking of while we have been away," interrupted Mr. Mowbray. "There's poor Susan Foster! Have you heard, my dear, about poor Susan Foster?"

"No, indeed. I have been so occupied with Alice and her baby, and so full of our own travels, I have not had time to go into the village. What has happened? You quite alarm me."

"Why, I really am put out about it myself. She is gone blind! Pretty Susan, with the bright eyes! I am quite vexed. If it had been any other girl in the village, I should not have felt it so much. Those soft brilliant eyes, that could sparkle so merrily too. And then, that pretty Mrs. Otley! she is going into a consumption."

"Susan — Susan Foster blind!" exclaimed the ladies all together.

"Impossible!" cried Mrs. Harcourt; the hopeful, happy, Mrs. Harcourt.

"It is quite true, my dear Alice: she is blind! and what's more, George Wells has jilted her, and has married Jane Dixon. The fellow has some taste, I will say that for him. She was as fine a girl as ever I saw, though hers is not such a high style of beauty as Susan Foster's. Susan Foster, if she had been a lady, would have looked well anywhere; now, Jane Dixon would never have told in a ball-room: and then, she is so altered; she is grown coarse; and blue eyes soon lose their blueness and turn grey, while black eyes retain their brilliancy —"

Mr. Mowbray might have proceeded at greater length in

discussing the comparative merits of black eyes and blue, but neither filial piety, nor conjugal devotion, could enable the listeners to keep silence any longer. "Oh, papa!" exclaimed Alice, "George Wells married to another girl! and Susan Foster blind, and jilted! and I had fancied her so happy in that cottage close to her parents! I remember begging you so to let them have it, because I thought how I should have liked to live close to you and mamma!"

"Yes, my dear Alice! I have seen Susan myself; and there she sits knitting, by the side of her blind father. I declare it was almost too much for me. I got away as quickly as I could, for I hate seeing sad sights when one can do no good; I always make it a rule to get out of the way."

"But do you think it impossible we should be able to do her any good? Let us go and see them, mamma; perhaps we may think of something. I always was so fond of Susan, and we were to have been married the same month! Poor dear Susan!"

"Oh, yes!" cried Emma; "at all events it will please them. Old Nicholas used to be so fond of me. How well I remember he used to put his hand upon my head to feel how much I was grown! Do let us go directly, and pay them a visit, dear mamma."

Mrs. Mowbray was shocked and grieved at Mr. Mowbray's intelligence, and the whole party was soon in motion along the well-known paths.

"I wonder how Susan looks!" said Emma, in a low voice, while a sensation of awe stole over her youthful mind at the prospect of an interview with a person who had undergone a great misfortune since she had seen her last.

Dame Foster soon recognised the visitors she had been watching for. "Here they are!" she exclaimed; "I was sure Mrs. Mowbray would come and ask after us before long. And there's Miss Alice—Mrs. Harcourt I should say—looks prettier than ever;—and Miss Fanny! I'm sure she does not seem as if anything had ever been the matter with her;—and Miss Emma, why she is almost a woman now." Susan sighed, and thought what sad changes had taken place in her fate since last they had received a visit from the squire's family.

As they approached the little garden-gate, the bearing of all the party became subdued and saddened; and they gently

opened the door, and followed each other quietly into the cottage. The dame and Susan both rose, and Susan court'sied, but not exactly in the direction in which Mrs. Mowbray stood. She soon made them resume their seats, and then inquired after old Sarah's health.

"Thank you kindly, madam, I am still able to get about, though sometimes I think my pains make me grow weaker; but I must try to the last to do for these poor afflicted creatures, madam. You have heard, I dare say, madam, of all our misfortunes. And there's my poor girl now, no better off than her old father. But 'tis as pleases God, and it is not for us to murmur."

The old dame had at once entered upon the subject in the plain, direct manner usual to the poor, and the restraint which might have rendered such a meeting distressing among the higher orders was soon dispelled.

"My poor Susan!" said Mrs. Mowbray, going up to Susan, and taking her by the hand, "I have only this moment heard of your afflictions, or I should have been here sooner. I wonder such sad news should not have reached me abroad, but the death of poor Mr. Sandford has been a loss to us all. He knew my village friends, and he would have told me about you. And you, Nicholas, how are you? How do you bear up against these trials?"

"Pretty middling, madam; pretty middling: I am quite used to my own, and I don't think anything at all about them; but I can't say I have rightly got over hearing my poor girl ask her mother whether 'tis a fine day or not, or who it is going by the door, and whether her shawl is pinned straight, or her cap as it should be. Them things go hard with me. But, as my good woman says, 'tis as it pleases the Lord! Are all the young ladies with you, madam?" he added, after a short pause. "I warrant me they are grown very tall," and he stretched out his hand: "I should like to put my hand on Miss Emma's head once more, bless her heart!"

"You must put it a good deal higher," said Emma, as the old man was feeling at the same height he had been used to feel, three years before; and she took his brown withered hand and lifted it to the crown of her head.

"Sure!" he exclaimed in almost childish wonderment.

Alice meanwhile had been talking to Susan, and had ex-

tracted from her some account of the mode in which her eyes had been attacked, although it was with pain she was brought to allude to anything connected with Alice's wedding-day and the happiness which at that time was hers. She could not help an inward shudder when she heard Captain Harcourt address his wife: "Alice, my love, I think you should return home to the baby; I would not have you out too late." The picture of home happiness, wedded love, maternal affection, all the visions in which she had indulged as almost realities on that day, rushed over her mind; but she remembered that George was the husband of another, that another was the mother of his child!

When they returned home, Alice eagerly recounted to Mr. Mowbray an instance of a person, whose blindness had been described as somewhat resembling Susan's, having been restored to sight by an oculist with whom Captain Harcourt was acquainted. With the sanguine disposition of youth, she felt convinced that something might be done; that Susan need not be condemned to perpetual blindness.

The more sober part of the company did not enter quite so warmly into Alice's hopes, but all were equally ardent in their wishes that Susan might recover her sight. Captain Harcourt's friend had the care of an eye-hospital; so that Alice declared it would be the easiest thing in the world to secure Susan's admission, and the most certain thing in the world that she would be immediately cured. The only difficulty that remained was to get over the prejudice entertained by many of the poor against hospitals in general, and the horror they had of parting from their friends.

"But Dame Foster is so reasonable!" exclaimed Alice; "and Nicholas is so quiet, he will never oppose it; and as for Susan, what would one not do to recover one's sight? To be sure, her lover is married now, and even the restoration of her sight cannot restore her to happiness, poor thing! But still! think of the joy of seeing the blue heavens and the green fields again!"

"Oh, yes, dear Alice," answered Mrs. Mowbray, "if we could indeed restore to Susan her eye-sight, she might look forward to many happy years. She is still young, and she is so pretty, that I dare say she may yet marry comfortably."

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed Alice reproachfully.

"I am sorry to have shocked you, my love! and if you wish it so much, we will suppose that Susan shall never marry."

"Mamma, you speak as if marrying was marrying, and as if it did not signify whom one married."

"Not exactly, my dear! but I do imagine it just possible that after a certain number of years have elapsed, a woman may be happy with a man who was not her first love. But now we will not disturb ourselves concerning the use Susan may make of her eyes when they are restored to her. We will first adopt all possible means to accomplish this most desirable, but, I fear, improbable event."

"She has had no advice yet but that ignorant man's at Turnholme. Captain Harcourt shall write to-day, and the moment we get the answer, I will undertake to persuade Susan and her parents to consent to our proposal."

All prospered according to Alice's wishes. Her *protégée* was to be admitted into the hospital, where she was to meet with every kindness and attention. Susan gladly agreed to any plan which might possibly enable her to assist her parents more effectually than she could at present; old Nicholas thought it so "against nature" that the young should be afflicted like the old, that he was pleased and hopeful, while Sarah assented, but assented despondingly.

"If it is God's will our poor child should be blind, why there is no use in man's fighting against Providence. However, there's no saying these may not be the means by which God has ordained she is to be cured; so it is not for us poor mortals to say any thing against it: we will try, and hope for the best; but it is an awful thing to have our blind child go quite away from us to that great town."

"But we will send somebody with her, dame, who shall see her safe into the hospital."

"Thank you, madam, you are very good; and let it turn out **which** way it will, we shall always be grateful."

The evening before Susan's departure, Farmer Otley called: "I thought I would just look in and wish you good luck, Susan; we shall all be heartily glad to hear of your doing well, though my good woman will miss your nice worsted-work. She would have come down to see you too, but that she is not quite as she should be. She has got a nasty cough that keeps plaguing her. I tell her 'tis because

she will wear such smart thin shawls, instead of a good warm cloak ; but young women they will have their own way : I dare say you have a way of your own too, Susan, though I don't know what it is."

Susan smiled. "I believe I was as headstrong as other young folks once ; but a poor helpless creature like me, who is quite dependent upon mother's goodness, has no business with any fancies now."

"Well, Susan, I hope you will come back with a will of your own, that's all : and I dare say, dame, you won't mind."

"My poor Susan ! I should be glad enough, indeed, to see her her own sprightly self again ; and 'tis our duty not to throw away any opportunity that God puts in our way."

Susan was safely conveyed to the hospital, and from thence the reports, which were received by Mrs. Harcourt, and duly transmitted to Nicholas and Sarah Foster, were satisfactory. The hopeful Alice was not disappointed in her eager desire to serve Susan ; and before six weeks had elapsed, she was able to run breathless to the cottage of the Fosters, with the surgeon's letter in her hand, announcing that Susan's sight was safe, and that in another month she might return to her friends, in health and happiness.

Old Sarah clasped her hands in speechless joy ; the tears rolled in torrents unheeded down her face : her soul was absorbed in prayer. Old Nicholas groped about till he found Mrs. Harcourt's hand ; and seizing it, the old man suddenly fell on his trembling knees before her.

"God bless you, my dear young lady, and God reward you ! I know it is to God we first owe our gratitude ; but you have been the blessed instrument in his hands. God bless you !" and the old man sobbed aloud. Alice, inexpressibly distressed and affected, assisted him to rise, replaced him in his seat, extricated her hand from his grasp, and hastened away from a scene which, although delightful, was almost too overcoming.

At length Susan herself wrote to them : it was the first act of her restored sight : and the dame placed the letter before her on the deal table, with her prayer-book and her spectacles, and every day did she look at it, and every day did she read it over, word by word, to Nicholas, and every day did Nicholas say "God bless Miss Alice that was !"

CHAPTER XI.

Wise Nature is less partial in her love
 Than ye do judge withal. When lavishly
 She pours her gifts profuse, satiety
 Doth blunt the sense : when sparingly dispensed,
 A keener relish doth supply the measure ;
 And but to live and see the blessed skies
 (A good unmarked, unheeded, till 'tis lost,)
 Is rapture all too big for utterance
 To one long shut from heaven's light.

Unpublished Poems.

It was a joyful day in Overhurst when Susan Foster returned to her home. The old man and his wife had toddled up to the village inn, where the coach stopped ; and there they stood, Sarah to catch the first glimpse of her, Nicholas to hear the first sound of her voice. Many a head was popped out of a casement window, and many a doorway was thronged with its inhabitants, at the hour when the coach usually arrived. George Wells was lingering in a field hard by, occasionally looking over the stile. He had twice called upon the Fosters during Susan's absence, and had inquired, in an awkward, hurried manner, how she was. The inquiry was meant kindly, and it was taken kindly.

The coach drove up to the little inn, and out sprang Susan, blooming and lovely as ever. The old woman nearly fainted ; and the neighbours assisted her and the trembling Nicholas into the little parlour of the inn.

In about half an hour, Susan was seen supporting the feeble steps of her mother on one side, and on the other those of her father, down the village street, to her own dear home. George Wells had disappeared ; and the other neighbours did not intrude upon the sacred joy of that family party.

" Oh, mother, did we ever expect to be so happy !" exclaimed Susan, as they entered the little garden : " And there is my own moss-rose blowing !" — a slight pang shot through her, for George had given her the tree : but she was too happy, too grateful, to allow any but feelings of thankfulness to find a place in her heart.

With what eagerness did Susan hasten to busy herself about the household duties ! with what pleasure did she resume her former privilege of settling her father in his seat,

of preparing the supper, of assisting her father up stairs! She had thought the first sight of the heavens glorious, she had gazed with rapture on the face of Nature, she had recognised with tenderness each well-known spot of her youthful home; but all these had been but lesser joys in comparison with that of once more ministering to the comfort of her parents, after having so long been a burthen to them. Never were prayers of more heart-felt gratitude offered up to the throne of Grace than those of the Foster family that night.

Early the next morning, Susan repaired to Overhurst Park, to make her acknowledgments to her benefactors; and as she walked alone through those paths where she had so often wandered with George, which she had never beheld since she had seen them with him, did not the memory of former days come over her with almost overwhelming power? She thought of him certainly, but she thought of him as the contented husband of another; and after having drunk so deeply of the bitter cup of affliction, her present comparative happiness seemed as great as mortals might dare to hope for in this world. She looked with kindly feelings on all around her. There was no touch of bitterness in her emotions.

Farmer Otley was one of the first to welcome Susan home again. He told her his wife was still very poorly, "and that she would take it very kind" if Susan would step up and pay her a visit some evening at Holmy-bank.

"Well, Susan," he said, "I need not be fetching you any more worsted from Turnholme now. You won't send me to market any more. Those eyes of yours can see to take up your old trade again. I dare say my mistress will have some needlework for you, for she is a rare bad hand at plain-work herself."

A few days after Susan's return, she was employed in tying up some straggling flowers, and in winding the honeysuckle round the porch, enjoying the long untasted pleasure of attending to her little garden, when, on looking round, she saw George Wells loitering under the hedge of the field which we have often described as being opposite Master Foster's house.

Upon finding himself observed, George made a sudden effort, and leaping the stile, he crossed the road, came straight up to Susan, and, before she had time to collect herself, he had taken her hand, shaken it, and had hastily uttered,—

"I just came to tell you I was heartily glad you had got your eye-sight back again, Susan ; and to wish you health and happiness, Susan : that's all :" and he was gone.

Susan trembled all over ; she tottered back into the cottage, and sat down.

"I have just seen him, mother, for the first time these three years ! But it was not so much the seeing him, as the hearing his voice again. It has put me quite in a tremble ; but I shan't mind it another time. I *must* not mind it, you know, mother ; and I am so happy, oh ! so very happy, to be able to do for you and father, that I do not feel as if I had any thing left to wish for !"

In a few days Susan paid her promised visit to Mrs. Otley, and she found her indeed sadly altered. She passed through the kitchen, where all bore the marks of the mistress's eye being wanted : a servant-girl, in greasy *papillotes*, the children in smart frocks, but with unwashed faces ; the copper vessels, instead of being the pride of the housewife and of her assistants, all out of their places ; the floor, as if it had not been swept and sanded for a week. The slipshod maid, with a dirty apron, ushered Susan into the parlour within, where Mrs. Otley sat in a shabby-genteel arm-chair, cowering over the fire, although it was in June.

Her cheeks were sunk, and there was a hectic flush upon them which alarmed Susan ; her voice sounded hollow. The smart cap, of which we have already made mention, had now fallen from being a "dress cap" into being an "every-day cap," a purpose for which it was peculiarly unfitted. Its weak wires, and its heavy ribands, shook in a most unseemly manner as the sick woman restlessly moved her head. She laid down the well-thumbed novel she was reading : — "I am glad to see you, Susan," she said. "Why you look surprisingly well, as blooming as a rose. Mr. Otley told me how well you were, and he said your eyes were as black as sloes : I was quite curious to see you. Sit down, Susan, and tell me all about it." But before Susan could begin to speak, Mrs. Otley continued ; — "I am such a poor creature — this cough fidgets me so ; but I am a great deal better, only the weather is so unseasonable, and the cold winds always affect my nerves. Do you think I look ill ?"

"You are something thinner than you were, ma'am," an-

swered Susan ; “but it is three years since I saw you last, and three years is a long time.”

“So it is a long time, Susan ; but now tell me, what did they do to you in London ? I am so curious ! Did you stay in the hospital all the time ?”

“Yes, ma’am, I never left it, except to come home.”

“What ! did you not see any of the sights ? Not the King’s palace, nor the theatres, nor anything ?”

“No, ma’am, ’tis against the rules for people to go out visiting ; and sure, as soon as I was well, I wanted to see nothing so much as father, and mother, and home. As soon as I was able, they set me to work, cleaning the place, and helping to wait on other poor creatures who were worse than myself.”

“Poor girl, that was very hard !”

“Oh no, ma’am ; I was very glad to be useful, and I was a deal happier than being idle. I missed my worsted-work sadly at first ; the time seems so very long when one has nothing to do — nothing but to think, think, think !”

Just then Farmer Otley entered.

“I say, Lizzy, where are the keys of the cellar ? I want to get something to drink for Mr. Hawkins, who is waiting at the door.”

“Dear Mr. Otley, don’t speak so quick ; you hurry one. The keys are in my reticule ; it is up stairs. Tell Hetty to fetch it.”

Mr. Otley went after Hetty, and Mrs. Otley remarked, “Poor dear Mr. Otley ! his manner is so abrupt ! He is not used to an invalid !”

“Lizzy, I can’t find your bag anywhere. The keys should be in your pocket : feel for them there.”

“Dear Mr. Otley, you know I do not wear pockets ; a reticule is so much more convenient.”

“Well ! but where are the keys ? Mr. Hawkins will think I grudge him a glass of ale.”

“Oh ! my love, be patient ; you quite make me shake !” and she began in a really nervous trepidation to hunt for the reticule, which was found in her chair.

Mrs. Otley and Susan resumed their conversation, when presently the farmer returned.

“Lizzy, you have not got a needle and thread handy, have

you? I told you I thought this button would soon be off, and so it is."

"Oh, dear Mr. Otley, I thought you had told Hetty to sew it on yesterday. Do call her, and tell her to bring my work-box here." The good-natured husband called Hetty, and after some time the needle and thread were found.

"Come, look sharp; I must be at the Vestry at three o'clock; and I don't like to be seen with my waistcoat all any how."

Mrs. Otley's fingers really trembled as she was sewing on the button. "Why, Lizzy, I have hurried you! I am sorry for that. There, never mind; don't fluster yourself."

"You never think of one's nerves, Mr. Otley."

"I'll tell you what, Lizzy, if you did not talk about them, or if you did not call them nerves, I should think about them. I see you are not well, and you have got a bad cough, and I must take care of you; so don't fret yourself, but keep quiet. I'll try to see to the things myself, though in-door matters are not in my way: but we must make a shift."

"I am sure Mrs. Glover never did all the drudgery poor dear Mr. Otley expects me to do," said Mrs. Otley, when her husband had left them: "I do not think a wife is to be a servant," she continued, with a toss of her head.

Susan thought that a wife ought to see that all was well regulated in her household; but poor Mrs. Otley was evidently ill and suffering, and she pitied her. As Susan went away, she saw the little girl crying because the maid had slapped her, and the little boy slapping the maid because she would not let him put his fingers into the pie she was preparing. She retraced her steps to her humble home, in the full persuasion that she was happier than any of the inmates of Holmy-bank farm.

Poor Mrs. Otley became rapidly worse; and before many months had elapsed, her troubles and her finery were alike brought to a final close, and she was laid in the quiet grave.

Mr. Otley remained a widower with two young children. He was a sincere mourner. The natural kindness of his heart had caused him to become truly attached to the woman whose preference for him had at first been her principal attraction; and her sufferings latterly had still farther endeared her. But when the freshness of his grief had subsided;

when he found that a bustling old body, whom he took as housekeeper, kept all things around him far more neat and trim than they had formerly been ; when he found his kitchen clean, his buttons sewed on, his shirts mended ; and, above all, when everything he asked for was always forthcoming from that compendious receptacle, the old woman's pockets,—his spirits gradually revived. His children were less fretful, their faces were cleaner ; and he only lamented that the old woman could not read, and that he had not much leisure himself to attend to their morals, or their education. By degrees he began to think that a younger woman might perhaps attend to the dairy and to the chickens as effectually as old Goody Thompson ; that a younger woman might make the new servant-girl (for Mrs. Thompson had dismissed the slip-shod maiden) scour the pots and pans as perseveringly ; and he also began to think it would be more agreeable to have a younger face and a brighter smile welcome him home, after his labours of the day. And whom could he find who would be more active and useful than Susan Foster ? Who was calculated to train his children's minds to duty, submission, and religious resignation, more practically than Susan Foster ? And where could he find a brighter smile, or more sparkling eyes, than Susan Foster's.

CHAPTER XII.

Bairns, and their bairns, make sure a firmer tie
 Than aught in love the like of us can spy.
 See you twa elms that grow up side by side :
 Suppose them, some years syne, bridegroom and bride ;
 Nearer and nearer ilka year they 've pressed.
 Till wide their spreading branches have increased.
 This shields the other frae the eastlin blast,
 That in return defends it frae the west.

ALLAN RAMSAY.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Otley had no longer any commissions to perform at Turnholme for Susan, her worsted-work having given place to her former occupation of needle-work, still he found many an excuse for calling. Sometimes he would send the old man a rabbit for his supper ; sometimes a cheese, the handy-work of Dame Thompson. At another time, he gave

Susan a hive of young bees which had just swarmed, as the dame had said she was fond of honey. By degrees he greatly won upon the esteem of Susan by his attentions to her parents. He was in a situation comparatively so much superior to theirs, that he had the opportunity of appearing to them almost in the light of a benefactor. Some time, however, elapsed before he ventured to express his feelings in any mode but by kindness to her parents. The sorrows she had known, the trials she had gone through, and the composed resignation to which she had trained her mind during her affliction, had left a sedate self-possession in her cheerfulness. He was aware of her previous attachment, and he did not feel sure whether an offer of marriage would be received, in the manner probable, from the relative situation of the parties.

At length his little presents became more pointedly addressed to her. His basket of ripest gooseberries was given to her. He would invite her to take a walk to look at his garden and gather herself a nosegay. He sometimes lamented to her that his children were not sufficiently attended to. "He did not wish to bring them up to over-gentility, but he wished them to have a good plain education. He should like his girl to be as good a scholar as Susan was ; that would do for him : plain useful learning, plain useful good sense, and plain useful work. He wished Susan would step up and see how little Lizzy went on." But this Susan did not like to do.

The neighbours already began to talk, and the old dame already began to hope her girl was likely to be well settled in life ; "and then," as she said to Nicholas one evening, when Susan was gone out to carry home some work, — "and then, Nicholas, it does not signify how soon it pleases the Lord to take us : then I may pray, as I used to do, that I may never see another sun rise when once it has pleased God to call you to himself."

Susan herself had no pride of romance about her. She esteemed Mr. Otley, and she was aware that he became every day more particular in his manner to her ; she knew that the home he could offer her would be comfortable beyond what she had any right to expect ; his plain manners appeared to her neither rough, nor homely, and she felt sorry for the little children, who were deprived of a mother's tenderness. Such being the state of mind of the parties in question, the sequel

may easily be guessed. Mr. Otley stopped one evening on his way from market, as it was now grown his custom to do, and good-naturedly reproached Susan for not having been to see his garden or his children. She was ashamed to give the true reason, and said she had been very busy with a job of needle-work.

"I don't like you to work so hard, Susan: it is not good for her, is it, dame? Young folks should take a little pleasure sometimes. I know I should like to see Susan in a home of her own, with a servant-girl to do her work for her. She is too good by half to be always drudging."

"Thank you kindly for your good wishes, Master Otley," answered old Nicholas. "I should like to know my poor girl had a good home over her head when I am dead and gone."

"Ah! that's what a good father is sure to think of. You would rest easier, Master Nicholas, if you knew Susan was mistress of a comfortable place of her own, and was never likely to come to want as long as she lived."

"Ah, sure! should I," replied the simple old man, who was in great hopes Mr. Otley was coming straight to the point. And he wished no better than to come to the point: but it is not easy to propose in company; and, straightforward as Mr. Otley was, he began to feel as shy as others do in this predicament.

"I should like to see Susan in a home of her own very much," repeated Mr. Otley, slowly and awkwardly, and looking out of the window when he had spoken.

The dame, who plainly perceived what was in the farmer's mind, thought that if Susan was out of the way he might speak openly to them, or if Susan was alone, he might find courage to declare himself to her. She therefore, with feminine resource, told Susan to go to the shop and buy her a pennyworth of ginger to put in her tea. Susan had left the cottage in a moment, for she found herself becoming confused and uncomfortable. Mr. Otley lingered a short time, and said nothing; but when he left the cottage he watched for Susan's return, and their conversation was prolonged till the dame began to doubt whether she should ever have any ginger at all.

When Susan reappeared, Mr. Otley was with her. She looked blushing, but happy; the farmer confused, but glorious, as he told Nicholas he "hoped he would rest soundly that

night ; that is, if he thought Holmy-bank farm was a place where Susan might make herself comfortable, and if he could trust to him to see she never wanted for anything as long as he lived."

The old people did not attempt to conceal their satisfaction, and never was son-in-law more cordially received.

We have already celebrated two weddings in this short tale, and it was not long before a third took place in the village of Overhurst. Mr. and Mrs. Otley ate their wedding-dinner in the Fosters' cottage ; for Mr. Otley had had enough of finery and fine folks, and he enjoyed the heartfelt happiness of those whom he felt he rendered happy. When he took his bride home in the evening, he left the old couple in a state of blissful composure of mind which they had once thought could never again be theirs on this side the grave ; and when they retired to rest, they returned their fervent thanks to Heaven for having been allowed to see this day : and now they felt their task was ended, their duties were fulfilled.

CHAPTER XIII.

Then be it still my nightly prayer
To live to close his sightless eyes,
For this my torturing pains to bear,
Then sink in death ere morning rise !

With steadfast hope, and faith serene,
The humble prayer of dutious love,
Pour'd ardent forth in anguish keen,
Was heard where mercy rules above !

Unpublished Ballad from Nature.

SUSAN FOSTER's unexpected prosperity was not regarded without envy by some of her neighbours ; and old Nelly, her former mistress in the art of knitting, whose temper had not grown more gentle with increasing years and infirmities, failed not to remark to her grand-daughter that " she could not see, for her part, what there was about Susan Foster that people should always make such a fuss with her. Other poor souls had their afflictions, but the gentlefolks did not send them to all the great London doctors to be cured ; other girls had had bad eyes before now, but they did not get a good husband a bit the more. And if Susan Foster was so lucky as to marry

so much above her station, she thought she ought to do something for her poor old father and mother, who had taken care of her when she was blind. Folks might talk of Susan being such a dutiful daughter, and all that ; but for her part she did not see what the old people were the better for having a farmer's wife for a daughter."

"I am sure," answered Patty, "I cannot see anything particular about Susan, grandmother ; I think there are many girls in Overhurst who are quite fit to be her match. And many a time since I have grown big, I have wondered why I used to be so pleased when Susan Foster spoke kindly to me, and told me I was a good girl. I think she took upon her very much ; for though she may be quite a great lady, and may ride in her one-horse chay now, she was no better than myself then !"

"Ah, my dear Patty ! 'tis the way of those people who seem to have such a respect for themselves, to make themselves somehow respected by others. However, Susan is but a labourer's daughter after all, and I don't see why you should demean yourself to her : I have no patience with your upstarts. A poor girl that could not have earned a farthing, and must have gone into the workhouse, if I had not taught her how to knit ! and now she goes driving by with her husband, and has called upon me but once, though she has been married a fortnight ; and has never sent me anything but a basket of apples out of her orchard, which don't cost her a farthing." Just at this moment a boy knocked at the door, and Patty lifted the latch to admit him. "Mrs. Otley's respects, ma'am, and she sends you a goose, and a bottle of Farmer Otley's elder wine, that you may drink her health on old Michaelmas day." Nelly was a little at a loss what to reply ; but after contemplating the present with a satisfaction which she could not quite controul, she consoled herself by saying to Patty as soon as the boy was gone : "Mrs. Otley's respects, indeed ! I think it would have been more respectful if Madam Otley had called herself with her present, instead of sending it by a scrubby boy."

It may well be imagined that if Susan did not forget old Nelly, she took care that her parents should never want any comfort which her affection could provide for them, and her kind-hearted husband seconded her wishes to the uttermost.

He would willingly have had them remove to Holmy-bank ; but the old man had learned to grope his way about his own cottage, and he would have missed his accustomed walk to his own stile, and they found it was kinder not to break in upon his habits.

Mrs. Thompson had resigned her charge to Susan ; and Mr. Otley found that not only were the dairy and poultry-yard as efficiently attended to, but that his children became orderly and submissive, and that his house soon acquired that air of home comfort, of tasteful neatness, that a wife only can give it. In her dress Susan took old Mrs. Otley, the mother, as her model, although she somewhat accommodated herself to the fashion. She was a goodly sight to look upon as she sat by her husband's side in the market-cart, once denominated a chaise, her black hair parted on her white forehead, her smooth, rounded, blooming cheek enclosed in her snowy cap, and black velvet bonnet, with her brilliant eyes glancing gaily as she stopped at her father's door on her way to market. More than a year had thus glided by in sober and respectable happiness, when old Nicholas began to droop : he could no longer reach his favourite stile. He was obliged to content himself with leaning in his accustomed attitude over the wicket of his own little garden. After a while he could do no more than take his seat at the cottage-door, there to feel the rays of the setting sun. Susan now devoted herself to her parents, and all other considerations sank before the paramount duty she owed to them. One evening she had brought him his tea to the door, where Mr. Otley had settled him on his own chair, and she asked him if he felt the warmth of the sun. " I don't seem to have any warmth in my bones," he said ; " but I like to know the sun is shining upon me."

" Ah, the sun is a glorious thing," said Sarah, " as it sets there in its golden bed ; but when my poor Nicholas is at rest, I never wish to see its bright face again. You have got a good husband, Susan, and a comfortable home, and you will not want me now ; my pains have almost worn me out : there's no taking pleasure even in the works of God, when one is so racked by pain."

" How well you do bear your sufferings, mother, 'tis very seldom you make any complaints."

" There's no good murmuring, my dear Susan ; and it is my duty to bear what 'tis God's pleasure to send."

They looked round, and the old man's head had dropped back upon the chair; they thought he was asleep; but he did not breathe: life was extinct. His wife was the first to understand the truth. "My husband's spirit has passed," she said. "My poor Nicholas is at rest, — he is in heaven! He is happy! Look at that smile, — yes, he is happy. God's will be done!" and she bowed her head.

In tears and trepidation Farmer Otley and Susan moved him within doors. He carried the lifeless body, and laid it on the bed upstairs; while Susan held her mother's hands, kissed them, and wept over them. "He is gone, Susan! my poor husband is gone! He has left me — my poor Nicholas!" and she rocked herself backwards and forwards, her hands clasped upon her knee.

The neighbours soon assembled; the last sad duties were performed; and the aged woman, whose melancholy province it was to lay out the dead, and to keep her dreary vigil by the corpse, attended as usual. But old Sarah would not allow her to remain. She said, "she had done for Nicholas to the last while he was living, and she did not see what need there was of any one else to tend him now. She thanked the neighbours kindly, but she could watch by her husband now, as then; and she would not trouble any of them." She settled herself, in her chair at the head of the bed, and sat there silent, meek, and patient.

Susan, who was a nurse, had her baby brought from the farm, and established it in what had formerly been her own little bed-room. She and her husband then took their station in the chamber of death, and together looked upon the decent corpse of the old man.

The brilliant sunset had been followed by a stormy night. The wind howled, and the rain beat against the casement. The rush-candle burned fitfully, and shone with an uncertain light upon the sunk but placid features of the old man. Susan could scarcely defend herself from the vague and superstitious terrors which assail the uneducated on such occasions. The furniture creaked; noises, which in the day are unnoticed, sound startlingly acute in the stillness and darkness of the night. Susan frequently crept into the adjoining apartment to see how it fared with her baby; she bent over it as it slumbered, she listened to its respiration till she fancied it

drew its breath painfully. When suffering under one calamity, the human heart is tremblingly alive to the apprehension of others. She imagined the infant was pale ; she stole back to beckon her husband to look upon it with her. He attempted to reassure her ; but Susan's heart was oppressed with the foreboding of some fresh ill, and it required all Mr. Otley's patience and good-nature to soothe fears which appeared so unreasonable.

It was an inexpressible relief when the grey dawn began to appear. The rain all cleared away, and the sun shone forth in all its splendour ; every leaf was glittering in the sunshine, the rain-drops hung on every spray, the birds sang as if to strain their little throats, the flowers were beginning to expand to the welcome rays. Susan placed her baby in her husband's arms while she returned to share her mother's melancholy watch.

When she entered the low room, the sun almost dazzled her : its beams streamed in upon the slanting, white-washed ceiling : they shone full upon her mother's face, as she sat in the same attitude in which she had left her, — her head supported by the high back of the upright chair, her hands slightly clasped as they had fallen on her knee, and her eyes closed.

Susan drew near ; her mother spoke not, moved not : she knelt by her — she listened in breathless agony — no sound, no sign of recognition. The sunbeams glared upon her eyelids, but she heeded them not.

A nameless chill ran through poor Susan's frame. She dared not touch her mother's hand. She rose from her knees, and tottered back to her husband. " I wish you would come to mother," she said ; " she is very still. Mother is very still and very pale," she added, in a voice scarcely audible. Susan's looks were ghastly. Mr. Otley hastily placed the sleeping infant on the bed, and followed Susan. The truth was at once evident ! " Your mother's prayers have been heard, dear Susan ; she has not seen another sun rise, she has not seen the sun which now shines upon her. Her troubles are over, and we should thank God for his mercy to her ! "

And the time did come when Susan was able thus to feel ; when she was able to rejoice that her mother's humble prayer had thus been granted ; when she learned to look upon its ac-

complishment as an earnest that the spirits of her parents were enjoying the reward of their piety, and their submission. But, at first, nature had its course, and she could but weep for that dear mother who had supported her under her heavy affliction, consoled her in her sorrows, tended her in her helplessness. Nor did her husband oppose the grief which was so natural : he wept with her ; and she felt the holy tie which bound them together for weal and for woe, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, become more closely riveted as she clung to him for support, as she turned to him as her only earthly comforter.

The neighbours again assembled. The two corpses were decently laid out in the same chamber which for so many years they had inhabited ; and all who had known them in life, came to have one last sight of Nicholas and Sarah Foster.

Susan was soothed by this mark of respect to those whom she had loved so well ; and she was gratified when, among the rest, George Wells mounted the narrow stairs to look once more upon the well-known faces of the departed. She wept when she heard him sob, as he came down again, and when he wrung her hand as he hurried by through the little kitchen where she sat in deep but gentle grief. She wished not that he should cherish the recollection of herself ; but any slight to the memory of her parents would have been bitter, coming from him whom they had once treated as a son.

One funeral service was performed over the venerable couple ; one grave received their mortal remains ; one stone still marks the spot where they repose ; and together, we may well believe their spirits mounted to those regions where suffering and sorrow are unknown.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

BLANCHE.

CHAPTER I.

The hidden traynes I know, and secret snares of love ;
 How soon a look will prynte a thoughte, that never may remove.
LORD SURREY.

AT the period when our story commences, Lord and Lady Westhope had been married sixteen years. Theirs had been a love-match. The love had lasted on the part of the lady at least seven years and three months; but on that of her lord not quite seven months and three weeks, from the wedding-day.

Lord Westhope had then been thrown with the handsome but designing Lady Bassingham, who made an easy conquest of his heart; which conquest she retained till the rustic bloom of Lucy Meadows, his wife's new maid, eclipsed the somewhat faded charms of the lady of fashion. When weary of Lucy Meadows, he became deeply smitten with the Honourable Miss Asterby, the young beauty of the day, who indulged her vanity in listening to the compliments of a married man, and allowed him to monopolise more of her conversation than was either judicious, or prudent.

To these succeeded another and another object, selected from every rank and condition of life.

During the six years, seven months, and one week, which Lady Westhope's love survived that of her husband, she had undergone tortures of jealousy, anger, indignation, and mortification. At the end of this time she made up her mind to her fate, and bore his infidelities with tolerable composure.

Henceforward their domestic life was very peaceable. The wife no longer reproached and wept; and the husband was exceedingly gay and good-humoured.

But now began trials of another sort to Lady Westhope. She was extremely handsome: her beauty was of a sort to be more striking at twenty-five, than at eighteen. Her husband was known to be faithless—she was soon found to be indifferent. All vain and idle young men consequently aspired to her favour. It need not be added, that the number was prodigious!

But though she had been disappointed in her hopes of being loved, she resolved to pass through life admired and respected. She would set the world the example of a beautiful and neglected wife, defying the breath of slander, repressing every sign of admiration, and pursuing her course uncontaminated by the profligacy around her. A word, a look of encouragement, would have brought any of these aspiring youths to sigh at her feet; but on none did she deign to bestow a glance—firmly and calmly did she check the first symptom of preference which might be evinced towards her.

She was not blessed with children, but she had many female friends; and to her cousin, Lady Blanche De Vaux, she was warmly attached. Lady Blanche was fifteen years younger than herself, and her affection for her young cousin combined something of a maternal character, with the ease and companionship of two women who were both in the perfection of womanhood; for Lady Westhope at thirty-four had scarcely lost any of her beauty, and Lady Blanche at nineteen was in the fulness of hers.

The Westhopes were going to Paris; and Lady Westhope proposed to Lord and Lady Falkingham, that their daughter, Lady Blanche, should accompany them. Lady Falkingham had gone through the toilsome duties of chaperonage for a series of years, during which she had successfully disposed of her elder daughters in marriage. She was not sorry, therefore, to repose from her labours, and to entrust the youngest to the care of so unexceptionable a person as her niece, Lady Westhope.

To Paris went Lady Blanche, in all the buoyancy of youth; escaped for the first time from the trammels of an education in which no possible accomplishment had been neglected, and

the vigilance of the most correct of mothers. She was enchanted with the Louvre, full of admiration at the beauties and grandeur of Paris ; amused with the theatres, the Champs Elysées, with Tivoli—with everything ; and entered with spirit and gaiety into the agreeable society which is nowhere to be found in greater perfection than at Paris.

Lady Westhope was also amused and interested ; and, for the sake of Blanche, mixed more generally with the world than it was her custom to do.

Lord Westhope also amused himself very much ; but how, we do not exactly know.

Independently of their rank and their situation, the beauty of our two cousins would have rendered them no inconsiderable personages among the English at Paris. Lady Westhope's skin was whiter than snow, — her hair blacker than the raven's wing, — her form full and graceful, — her manner calm and self-possessed : had she been unmarried, it might have been thought cold, perhaps haughty ; — as a matron, it was dignified. Lady Blanche's clustering curls, and hazel eyes of the same rich dark brown as her hair, the mantling glow of her blooming cheek, her slender form and elastic step, possessed all the graces of youth, while her countenance beamed with animation, joy, tenderness, and each emotion that rapidly succeeded the other in her bosom.

Among the many slight preferences, incipient flirtations, and positive love-makings, which took place in the set to which Lady Westhope belonged, none was more decided than that between the beautiful Lady Blanche and Captain De Molton. She was a romantic, enthusiastic girl, peculiarly calculated to feel the attractions of a man who was formed to figure as a *héros de roman*. He was very tall, — he was pale, — his features were marked, but they bore an expression of melancholy and of feeling. The qualities of his mind corresponded with his exterior. Lofty, uncompromising rectitude, was combined with acute feelings, which, as his appearance indicated, were more calculated to work him woe than weal. A look of sentiment, though to the old and wary it may portend no happiness either to the possessor or to those connected with him, is often to the young and gay more attractive than the most joyous liveliness.

Captain De Molton was in love — desperately in love with

Lady Blanche. But he knew he was poor : he knew that if he was to offer her all he had — *i. e.* his whole undivided affections, Lord and Lady Falkingham could not in conscience allow their daughter to accept him. He therefore confined himself to watching her while she was talking to others ; he did not allow himself to occupy the seat by her side. If by chance he was betrayed into any expression of his feelings, he studiously avoided her for the next twenty-four hours ; and, by so doing, he flattered himself he was playing the part of a martyr. He fancied he was only endangering his own peace of mind ; he believed he so completely concealed what was passing within, that hers could run no risk. He had not the self-sufficiency to imagine he could win a heart he did not attempt to gain. But these very starts of passion, these inconsistencies, these uncertainties, the air of intense melancholy which at times overspread his countenance, were more dangerous to a person of Lady Blanche's disposition than the most open and decided attentions.

She could not think he was indifferent towards her ; yet she was piqued by his occasional avoidance, touched by his air of intense melancholy, delighted with the fire which gleamed from his eye when she addressed him, and with the smile which, when it did light up his countenance, was bright and dazzling as the sunbeam after a summer-storm.

In short, while intending to preserve her heart from the sentiment which possessed his own, he unconsciously acted with the most consummate coquetry —

“ Piqued her and soothed by turns.”

Things were in this state, when Captain De Molton's particular friend, Lord Glenrith, arrived at Paris. He was immediately struck with Lady Blanche's beauty, and fascinated by her manners. He was an eldest son, and heir to a fine property. He was extremely good-looking — his character was excellent — as a *parti* he was unexceptionable.

De Molton, with a lover's quickness of perception, read Lord Glenrith's feelings almost before he was aware of them himself ; and he thought it would be a crime to stand in the way of an union which would be advantageous to Lady Blanche, and which must indeed make the happiness of his best and earliest friend. Although it was almost agony to see Glenrith

constantly occupy at dinner the place he resolutely did not take, and to see him whisper soft nothings into her ear, which it would have been rapture to him to utter; though it was maddening to see Glenrith act as her escort on all morning excursions, when he seldom dared approach; still a sort of fascination bound him to the spot. It was with trembling anxiety that he watched Lady Blanche's reception of his friend's attentions, with pain which he could not control that he marked anything which might be construed into encouragement on her part; but it was with most unreasonable joy that he perceived her listen to him with cold indifference, and sometimes that he caught her eye glance towards himself while Lord Glenrith was by her side.

Any doubt he might entertain as to his friend's real intentions was soon set at rest by his one day confiding to him that he was very much attached to Lady Blanche, that his parents wished him to marry, and that he had made up his mind to propose, as soon as he felt sure of the lady.

This annunciation fell as a final deathblow on De Molton's hopes — if hopes they might ever have been called. "Yet Glenrith spoke doubtfully of her reception of his offer — and Glenrith is not usually over-diffident of himself," thought De Molton in the midst of his despair. Still he felt it would be folly, madness, to linger in the society of Lady Blanche. In all probability she would soon be the affianced wife of his friend. It would be base and treacherous in him to attempt to circumvent that friend — cruel to sport with her feelings; and now that Glenrith had spoken thus confidentially, there was nothing left but to withdraw himself from witnessing the prosecution of a suit, in the probable success of which he felt he ought to rejoice, while his spirit recoiled from the bare anticipation of such a result.

Accordingly he told Lord Glenrith that he was suddenly recalled to England on particular business. He seated himself in the cabriolet of the Calais diligence, and took his weary way to his native land with the most profound adoration of wealth — with the most ardent aspirations for honour, rank, riches, and all the good things of this world — that he might, without folly, or presumption, be entitled to throw himself at the feet of Lady Blanche.

Lady Westhope's duty, as a wise chaperon, would have

been to discourage in every way the attentions of Captain De Molton, and to foster those of Lord Glenrith. She meant to do so, — she thought she did so. She constantly repeated to Blanche how impossible it was that Captain De Molton should ever propose, how impossible that he should be accepted, how totally impossible that they could ever marry — or that, if married, they could have bread to eat ; and she thought she had done her duty. But the spectacle of a man, sincerely, ardently, respectfully, and hopelessly in love, was to her feelings, naturally warm, though she had encased them in an armour of coldness and reserve, so interesting a sight, that she could not help treating him and speaking of him as a person formed to win the heart of woman. All those who had formerly seemed inclined to pay her attention, she had from the very beginning treated with such repelling coldness, that she had never been exposed to the trial of witnessing real and sincere emotions strongly excited. In the desolation of her own secret soul, the sight was tantalising and painful. She could not help envying Blanche the power of calling them forth, nor could she help looking back with a sigh upon the blank of her own loveless career. She would have given anything for Aladdin's lamp, that she might have endowed young De Molton with the worldly wealth which could have secured to them the fate from which she was herself cut out.

The few months they passed at Paris had a sensible effect upon the minds of both the cousins. Lady Blanche for the first time felt love. She also felt keen mortification — for to nothing does love more completely blind its victim than to the sensations experienced by the object beloved. While Lady Westhope saw in Captain De Molton an interesting and high-minded young man struggling with a hopeless passion, — in short, while she accurately read, and was able to appreciate, his feelings, — Lady Blanche thought him cold, indifferent, capricious, and frequently doubted whether indeed he entertained any preference at all for her.

In Lady Westhope's mind a great change also had taken place. Perhaps the example of all around her (for, whatever the propriety of French women under the new *régime* may be, the conduct of English women, when once they have crossed the Channel, is not such as to impress foreign nations with a high idea of the morality for which we would fain be thought

remarkable), perhaps the more easy footing of society abroad, combined to produce in her vague aspirations after an interchange of sincere affection: visions of mutual love, devotion, attachment, &c. — notions against which, for nine years, she had been shutting her ears and barring her heart — again found entrance to her bosom.

CHAPTER II.

Whom call we gay? That honour has been long
The boast of mere pretenders to the name.
The innocent are gay. The lark is gay,
That dries his feathers saturate with dew
Beneath the rosy cloud, while yet the beams
Of dayspring overshoot the humble nest.

COWPER.

THE morning after De Molton's departure, our two cousins were prepared for an excursion to Versailles, and were expecting the gentlemen who were to accompany them, when Lord Glenrith entered. Lady Westhope inquired what was become of Captain De Molton.

"Gone," he replied: "he set off for England yesterday; — called home on some tiresome regimental business. But did you not see him? did you not hear from him? Very uncivil, faith! not at all like De Molton."

"I wonder he did not call," said Lady Westhope: and she stole a look towards Blanche, who was so busily employed in tying her bonnet and putting on her shawl, with her back towards them, and her veil half covering her face, that she could not detect how she took this unexpected intelligence.

The carriages of the rest of the party drew up in the street. Lord Glenrith ran down stairs to deliver a message to one of the Miss Elwicks, offering her Captain De Molton's seat in the barouche; when Lady Westhope remarked,

"How strange in Captain De Molton!"

"How mortifying!" replied Lady Blanche: "the idea of marrying may be foolish and imprudent, as you say, but he might leave me to find it out. I hate cold, calculating men, who do exactly what is right, and discreet, and proper; whose conduct nobody can find the least fault with. Such men may be esteemed, but they cannot expect to be loved. I almost

think I should prefer a warm-hearted, impetuous person, who was generously wrong, to a wary, prudent one, who was coldly right. But what am I saying? The simple fact is, that the poor man did not happen to like me. I do not know why I should find fault with him because he did not fall in love with me!" And she tried to smile, and to treat the whole thing lightly.

Lady Westhope could not help adding, "that she had thought, and indeed she did still think, that he was in love, notwithstanding his prudence." Lady Blanche had just time to reply, half bitterly, half jestingly, "that there could not be much love, if prudence could so completely master it;" when Lord Glenrith returned to hand them from their splendid apartments, down the dirty brick-stairs of a French hotel.

The day was beautiful — the drive not long enough to be fatiguing — the palace magnificent — the gardens noble — the whole replete with the most interesting recollections. Lady Blanche had always been an enthusiast about Madame de la Vallière, Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette. She had anticipated the greatest delight in visiting the scenes of so many events with which, from childhood, she had been familiar; but she found herself listening with the most absent mind to the details given by the guide, even though he pointed out the very balcony from which he himself remembered having seen Marie Antoinette, with the dauphin in her arms, addressing the people on that dreadful day when the royal family were carried off by the mob to the Tuileries. She looked round with vacant eyes at the white and gold apartments where Marie Antoinette held her evening soirées; nor could she warm herself into a proper emotion over the oratoire of the unfortunate king, nor even over the narrow back passage by which he attempted to escape.

In the gardens, the statues which were pointed out as those of Madame de Maintenon, Mademoiselle de Fontanges, and Madame de la Vallière herself, failed to excite any interest. In her present state of mind she thought it was all nonsense, and did not the least believe that Diana was Madame de Maintenon, or Fidelity, with a dog at her feet, was intended for Madame de la Vallière.

She became somewhat more interested at the Petit Trianon. The Swiss cottage, the vacherie of poor Marie Antoinette touched her, and she remarked to Lord Glenrith, on whose

arm she leaned, how, in the midst of all her splendours, the queen seemed to have preserved her taste for nature, the country, freedom, and simplicity. "It shows, after all, how insufficient are pomp and grandeur to happiness!" And she thought of Captain de Molton, and that just such a cottage as the Swiss farm, with him (supposing he had liked her, which he did not), would be vastly preferable to Versailles itself with any one else. Lord Glenrith thought, what a noble, high-minded girl! she will love me for myself — she will not be influenced by my being a good match; and he redoubled his attentions.

The party had obtained permission to have their collation laid out in the marble gallery; and they sat down, a large and brilliant party — as young, as beautiful, as had ever been the inmates of that palace, consecrated to pleasure, and pleasure alone.

Lady Westhope was the eldest lady present. The two Miss Elwicks were beauties — decided beauties, and in the first bloom of youth, with gay and lively manners, high spirits, light hearts, and vanity enough to thoroughly enjoy the admiration they were in the habit of exciting. Mrs. Courtney Astwell was very pretty, and, being married, and a coquette, of course commanded the attentions of the gentlemen still more supereminently than any of the other ladies, whatever their claims might be. Lady Westhope was, for the first time, quite in the background — nearly on the shelf. Lord Glenrith was devoted to Lady Blanche; Sir Charles Weyburn was decidedly struck with Miss Elwick; Lord James Everdon and Miss Eliza Elwick were so merry, that another joke succeeded, long before the laugh produced by the first had subsided. Mr. Stapleford, the sharp, sarcastic, clever *diplomate*, did Mrs. Courtney Astwell the honour of giving her his arm; while Lord Faversham walked on the other side and joined in the conversation, and the stripling Lord Elmington hovered on the flank or in the rear, as opportunity might serve.

Mr. Wroxholme alone remained for Lady Westhope. He was a new addition to the society whose claims to notice had not yet been ascertained. He was in the law, and he looked clever. He might be nearly thirty, and he was presentable in appearance and gentlemanlike in manners.

Notwithstanding the dignity and reserve of Lady West-

hope's deportment, she had never before found herself overlooked. Her rank, her respectability, her beauty, in the usual routine of dinners, parties, and balls, secured for her the attentions of some one of the first persons in the company. She never before had found herself the most *passée* of a party — and on an occasion, too, when the usual forms of precedence are not attended to. Though she had never sought or valued attention, she did not half like the absence of it. She never wished for it while she had to repel it, — it was not till it was withheld, that she found she attached to it any value whatever.

Mr. Wroxholme, however, was well informed and agreeable. By degrees she found he was acquainted with several acquaintances of hers, and the scenes which they were viewing together afforded matter of conversation.

At the breakfast, or luncheon, or by whatever name the repast might be designated, the pictures which adorned the walls of the gallery were discussed. Among others, that of Madame de Maintenon, with Madame de la Vallière's daughter at her knee. Lady Blanche exclaimed with energy, "The only redeeming point about that hypocritical old woman is her having been so good-natured to poor dear Madame de la Vallière's child!"

"And may I ask Lady Blanche why she so much prefers Madame de la Vallière to Madame de Maintenon?" in the softest voice imaginable, inquired Mr. Stapleford, who was rather fond of putting people out of countenance. In this case he perfectly succeeded; for though it is true that every one loves the erring Madame de la Vallière, and few have any tenderness for the discreet Madame de Maintenon, it would not have been so easy for a young lady to defend her feelings and opinions on the subject, without entering into a discussion which might be rather awkward.

This Lady Blanche felt, and replied scarcely knowing what she said. "Everybody pities Madame de la Vallière, because she was so unhappy!"

"Then every one who suffers may hope to have some place in your affections," whispered Lord Glenrith.

Mr. Stapleford replied, — "As an approving conscience is universally allowed to produce cheerfulness, I conclude the strictly virtuous have no chance of finding favour in Lady Blanche's sight."

"Oh ! Mr. Stapleford, how you misconstrue everything one says !" Blanche blushed, half in confusion, half in anger. Mr. Stapleford enjoyed it ; he liked to make women blush ;—many men do.

" I am sure every one present ought to be very much obliged to me for what I have said, if it is only for having brought so beautiful a bloom into Lady Blanche's cheeks."

All eyes turned towards Lady Blanche, who did indeed blush over forehead, throat, and arms, till the tears were ready to start from her eyes. Lord Glenrith uttered in a more severe tone than was usual to a person renowned for his good-nature —

" One would think Stapleford had neither mother nor sisters of his own, that he should find pleasure in causing a woman to blush." And at the moment Lord Glenrith worshipped Lady Blanche as devoutly as he hated Mr. Stapleford. Lady Blanche felt grateful to him for having defended her, and for having given Mr. Stapleford a reproof.

" Is Mr. Stapleford a friend of yours ? " said Mr. Wroxholme to Lady Westhope.

" Not at all," she answered ; " is he of yours ? " "

" I am happy to say he is a perfect stranger to me : that is a kind of man I detest."

Lady Westhope liked her new acquaintance, for his warmth and his openness.

The repast was over. The personages already mentioned sauntered for a short time before their departure among the close walks and the orange-trees. Lord James Everdon and Miss Eliza Elwick were inseparable ; not that they had the slightest preference for each other — their whole bond of union consisted in the magnificent set of teeth with which nature had favoured them both. They were not the least aware of the reason they were pleased with each other ; but it may be remarked, that those who have bad teeth do not find themselves so comfortable with a companion who makes them laugh, as with one whose conversation is more serious ; while a person with fine teeth discovers a point in many a jest, which to one who is conscious of anything defective in that respect would appear stale, flat, and unprofitable. Many flirtations might be traced home to similarity of teeth, which have passed for congeniality of disposition.

When they arrived at home, the two friends talked over

the day. "Who in the world is your Mr. Wroxholme?" said Lady Blanche.

"I assure you he is a very agreeable man," replied Lady Westhope, anxious he should appear to have been her companion by choice, rather than from necessity.

"What is he by birth and parentage?"

"I do not know, but he is acquainted with several people who are mutual friends; I shall invite him to my parties next spring. I think he will be a great acquisition."

"What an odious man Mr. Stapleford is! I always disliked his quiet sarcastic manner of dropping out just the thing that is most disagreeable; and I was so much obliged to the dear, good, honest Lord Glenrith, for giving him a lecture, which ought to have made him look foolish."

"How handsome Lord Glenrith is!" said Lady Westhope, curious to know how Blanche felt towards him.

"Yes! he certainly is handsome; but he has too much colour, and he looks so very healthy and robust! I do not think his countenance could express unhappiness. I like a man to look serious and thoughtful, as if he was full of feeling, and as if his gaiety was just a bright gleam of sunshine, the more brilliant for the gloom which precedes and follows it. Nothing is so beautiful as the smile of a countenance habitually melancholy."

Lady Westhope perceived that, notwithstanding her pique, Blanche had not forgotten De Molton.

They returned to England. The London season was nearly over; Parliament did not sit late; there was no business which required Lord Falkingham's presence, and Blanche joined her parents in the country, where they had already established themselves; but, as she passed through London, she went to the play with the Westhopes. They were leaving the theatre, when they met Captain De Molton on the stairs. He rushed to them with a face in which the much-admired smile usurped the place of the melancholy which Lady Blanche also admired. He asked her if she was staying in London: she replied she was going to Temple Loseley the next day.

"Then I must esteem myself fortunate to have caught even this glimpse of you."

"Oh, but I hope we shall see you in the country."

They were both thrown off their guard by the suddenness of the meeting, and their looks and their manner proclaimed the state of their feelings as much as it was possible for them to do so, in descending the last ten steps of the private box entrance. But he had handed her into the carriage—the door was closed—she was gone—before he had time to answer the sort of half invitation contained in Lady Blanche's last words.

Blanche had much to tell her mother ; all she had heard—all she had seen, but not all she had felt. Lady Falkingham was reserved with her children ; she was above all weaknesses herself, and never seemed to contemplate the possibility that younger minds might not be so well regulated, younger feelings might not be so sober and temperate, as her own.

The summer passed quietly ; Blanche rode with her father, gardened with her mother, and tried to think no more of a person who felt nothing for her. Had she not most unguardedly, most imprudently, almost invited him to Temple Loseley ? She forgot that, not being acquainted with her parents, it was absolutely impossible he could act upon such a hint. She only remembered that she had advanced a step which had not been met by him, and she recalled what she had heard and read a thousand times, that a lover can generally create an opportunity for seeing his beloved ; how much easier, then, to improve one that presents itself ! The only conclusion, therefore, to be drawn was, that she was an object of perfect indifference to him.

In September a party was collected for shooting ; and, among others, Lord Glenrith accepted with joy and eagerness an invitation to Temple Loseley.

Lord and Lady Falkingham rejoiced to see so fair a prospect opening before Blanche. Lord Glenrith was particularly good-tempered ; he was heir to a fine property ; there was not an objection to him. Lady Falkingham, whose health was very delicate, was much relieved by the idea that she need never again pass from twelve till four in the morning, seated on the blue sofas at Almack's, her head nodding with sleep under the plumes which she thought it her duty to place upon it.

Blanche could not fail to perceive that Lord Glenrith was serious in his attentions : it was impossible to dislike him ;

he was an honest, genuine creature ; he loved her sincerely, admired her, and respected her ;—he was not wanting in sense or information. Had not her mind been prepossessed, she would most likely have been in love with him ; at least, ninety-nine girls in a hundred would have been so, and ought to have been so. He proposed : her parents were delighted ; she was sorry, although she preferred him to any one else, except Captain De Molton. Yet, what nonsense to allow her imagination to dwell upon a person who cared not for her ! Should she refuse an excellent man who was sincerely attached to her—a connection with whom would delight her own parents, and his parents, and all their mutual connections, for the sake of a penniless captain who cut her—positively cut her ? It would be the height of folly ; there would be a want of pride in continuing to pine for an indifferent swain. So, as she had no good reason to adduce either to herself, or to others, for saying “ No,” she said “ Yes,” and she was engaged.

This great event took place a few days before the Falkingham family paid a long-promised visit to the Westhopes. Lord Glenrith was to have joined the party at the end of the week ; but, as the accepted lover, he obtained leave to accompany them to Cransley.

His sterling worth gained upon Blanche every day ; there was something so English, so true, so generous about him. Her parents were quite delighted with his sentiments upon all subjects connected with settlements. She heard him praised from morning till night, and she was beginning to persuade herself that she ought to be, and that she was, exceedingly happy, when they arrived at Cransley.

The sight of Lady Westhope reminded her of Paris, and of all she had felt when there ; and she was shocked to find she still retained such vivid recollections of incidents the most trivial in themselves. Mr. Wroxholme had arrived the day before, and at dinner Lord Westhope remarked, “ We shall be quite the old Paris party on Friday, when De Molton comes.”

Lady Blanche was listening to Lord Glenrith’s description of his father’s place, Wentnor Castle ; but she was not so absorbed in the subject, but that these words caught her ear. She gave an involuntary start ; she felt Lady Westhope look

at her ; she felt herself colour. But her start and her blush were unobserved : Lord Glenrith was completely occupied in explaining how the seclusion of the south and west fronts of the castle, and of the broad terrace overlooking the rapid stream of the Dwent, was preserved by the alteration in the road, which now approached the gateway from the north-east, instead of the north-west.

If Lord Glenrith had a fault, or rather a foible, it was his passion for his native place, and an inclination to think everything belonging to himself superior to that which belonged to another. He seldom sold a horse ; for when once he had possessed it, he became so alive to its merits, that he always asked more for it than others, who were not so clear-sighted, thought it was worth. This is a happy disposition for the possessor, and for those connected with him. It is seldom that such a person makes an unkind husband, or a tyrannical father, or a hard master ; but it is not a quality that interests a romantic girl. Lady Blanche, however, thought “ Captain De Molton shall see I am not pining ; he shall see that his friend can appreciate me, if he cannot.”

Mr. Wroxholme proved, upon farther acquaintance, to be a very agreeable addition to the society. He had read much, and was full of information. Lord Falkingham pronounced him to be one of the most rising young men of the day. Mr. Wroxholme, on his part, was delighted with Lord Falkingham’s political sentiments, with Lady Falkingham’s high-breeding, with Lady Westhope’s gentleness, with Lord Westhope’s good-humour and ease in his own house, with Lord Glenrith’s downright happiness, with Lady Blanche’s beauty, with the good shooting, and the beautiful place, and he felt gratitude towards Lady Westhope for having given him the opportunity of enjoying society so much to his taste.

He was a man of good birth ; but though born and bred a gentleman, he had not before mixed in the very first circles, and he was flattered at being deemed worthy of admission into one of them. He had discrimination enough to be pleased with the shade of superior refinement which pervaded it, and tact enough instantly to acquire its tone.

When Lady Westhope found herself alone with Lady Blanche, she never alluded to Captain De Molton ; she felt that the less that was said upon the subject the better.

Blanche had treated his departure from Paris as wilful neglect of her, and she had laughed at his indifference. Although in her heart Lady Westhope believed she had felt it acutely, it was wiser to treat the whole affair as a trifling flirtation which had left no trace behind. She was sorry Lord Westhope had invited Captain De Molton at this moment, but it was one of those things for which there was no remedy. He and Lady Blanche must meet some time or another, and the sooner it was over the better.

Lady Blanche, meantime, continued to receive Lord Glenrith's attentions, and to find her imagination more and more inclined to wander, and her mind less and less able to take in the relative positions of the stables, the kitchen-garden, and the coach-houses of Wentnor Castle.

CHAPTER III.

Dicen que amor ha vencido
A los deydades mayores,
Y que de sus pasadores
Cielo y tierra está ofendido.

Spanish Romance.

DURING the four months which intervened between Captain De Molton's leaving Paris and his joining the party at Cransley, how had he passed his time? He was a person of much determination of character, and when once he had made up his mind what was right, he could, generally speaking, carry his resolutions into effect; at least it was only when his feelings, naturally strong, were immediately under excitement, that he was betrayed into actions of which his judgment did not approve.

To Lord Glenrith he owed an early debt of gratitude: their friendship dated from boyhood. At Eton they had been bathing together, when De Molton was seized with the cramp, and must have perished, had it not been for the exertions of his young schoolfellow. This and many other acts of kindness which the rich heir of Wentnor Castle was naturally enabled to show to the penniless seventh son, and thirteenth child of the distressed Lord Cumberworth, made De Molton's

friendship for Glenrith partake in some measure of the nature of gratitude. He felt it would be doubly base in him to attempt to gain the affections of the girl to whom Lord Glenrith owned himself attached, even if, with regard to Lady Blanche herself, it would not have been ungenerous to drag her from her exalted sphere into poverty and destitution with him.

He went straight to his regiment, and devoted himself with particular energy to teaching his men the new manœuvres recommended by the Horse Guards. Never were men so well appointed, never was troop in such order. But his fellow-officers at the mess found him somewhat moody and silent; he was not a jolly companion; and although all respected him, — yes, and loved him too, and would have applied to him for advice and comfort in any distress, — he was not, in the common acceptation of the word, a popular man. It was not De Molton who was asked to ride this fellow's horse at the hack stakes got up in the regiment; or De Molton, to whom another fellow proposed to gallop forty miles to London to see the new actress, and down again at night, — or to jump into a hack-chaise after dinner and drive off to the tradesmen's ball at the county town: but if any dutiful son wished to prolong his visit to his parents, or any pining lover had an opportunity of flying to his mistress, he felt pretty sure that De Molton would take his duty for him. His manners were a little stately, and a youngster was not likely to choose De Molton as the confidant of any foolish scrape; yet no one was more ready to sympathize with, and to relieve, any case of unmerited distress.

He chanced to be in London one of the days that Lady Blanche passed there in her way from Paris; and he had been attending his mother, and three of his six sisters, to the play on the night when he saw Lady Blanche.

It was with an uncontrollable burst of joy that he rushed to hand her down the steps; and this brief interview sufficed to unsettle in his heart all the reasonable acquiescence in the disposition of their fates which he had been striving to attain.

When he received Lord Westhope's invitation, he certainly did not think it quite impossible he might meet Lady Blanche; but he persuaded himself that he had in four months allowed his friend all proper time for making himself acceptable, and that there was no necessity for his refusing the accustomed

invitation to a house to which he was in the habit of paying an annual visit. At all events, he should learn from Lady Westhope what was the state of the case: anything was better than the uncertainty in which he lived.

Lady Blanche's manner, when he met her on the dimly lighted stairs of the theatre, had made him vaguely hope — he knew not what; for, supposing they did love each other, what then was to happen? He repeatedly asked himself this question; but did any one ever wish that the person beloved should not return his love? De Molton was a very reasonable man — he kept his feelings under great controul, but they were strong and ardent, and he could not reach that pitch of stoicism!

To Cransley he went, with a mind distracted by doubt, wonder, hope, and fear. As he drove to the door, he saw Lord Falkingham dismounting from his cob; so he knew that Lady Blanche was in the house. "How will she meet me?" he thought; "how shall I find her? how shall I regulate my own behaviour?" and he almost repented having wilfully run into such danger; although, in truth, it was the hope of being placed in that very danger which had made him so gladly accept Lord Westhope's invitation.

He was giving his orders to his servant at the door, when he saw Lord Glenrith approach the house in shooting costume, followed by keepers and dogs. He could not mistake the bright, happy face of his friend. His teeth gleamed as the setting sun shone on them; his cheek was sun-burned, and ruddy with exercise; his kind eyes beamed with honest joy to see De Molton. De Molton's heart sank within him as he recognized his dear friend; and it was with an effort, which would have been visible to any other eyes, that he returned his cordial greeting.

As they both entered the drawing-room, the pale countenance and melancholy brow of De Molton would, in the opinion of many, have set off to advantage the gay good-humour of Lord Glenrith.

The ladies were all there. Lady Blanche shook hands with Captain De Molton as soon as he had paid his devoirs to Lady Westhope, and, without having raised her eyes higher than to his chin, reseated herself to her embroidery frame.

Lord Glenrith approached her. De Molton's heart beat

quick ; he felt almost giddy. Lord Glenrith's manner was gay and unembarrassed : he held a parcel in his hand. Lady Falkingham drew near — there was a great colloquy : De Molton heard the expressions “ beautiful ! ” — “ the prettiest I ever saw ! ” — “ they tell me it is the first that has been made ; ” — “ well, how lovely ! ” Lady Blanche seemed to be expressing her thanks, but in so low a tone of voice he could not catch the words. She looked blushingly beautiful ! Lady Falkingham moved a little on one side, and he saw Lord Glenrith in the act of fastening a bracelet on her arm. Perhaps another lover might not have selected such a moment for presenting his first love-token, but the parcel was only just arrived. Lord Glenrith was pleased with his purchase ; all around were friends, and why should there be any mystery ?

To De Molton's eyes all mystery was indeed dispelled. He felt choking. He could not master his feelings sufficiently to preserve an indifferent countenance, and he left the room under the pretence of seeing after his postboy, or his portmanteau.

The rest of the company gathered round the bride elect, and admired the beautiful ornament and discussed its peculiar fabric ; while poor Blanche sat frightened at the agitation which pervaded her whole frame in consequence of having been for five minutes in the society of De Molton.

However, when she retired to her own room before dinner, she satisfied herself that what she had felt was merely a very natural awkwardness at first meeting a person with whom she certainly had flirted a little, and shyness at being seen by a young man acquaintance, in the act of receiving her lover's first present. She could not help secretly wishing Lord Glenrith had not given the bracelet before so many witnesses, and she felt there was a want of delicacy in the proceeding, even while she told herself it was in unison with his open, unsuspecting character, which measured the kindness of others by his own good-natured heart.

At dinner De Molton placed himself at the farther end of the table, and the epergne prevented his being able to perceive Lady Blanche's face. However, he saw Lord Glenrith's ; and never did an honest countenance express more secure and undisturbed happiness. Poor De Molton ! He had quitted Paris on purpose not to stand in the way of that happiness

which his friend had obtained ; and now, how painful was it to see the object accomplished !

During the evening, Lady Westhope contrived, in as quiet a manner as she could, to convey to De Molton the confirmation of a fact which was already too evident to his eyes, and she appeared not to remark the varying hues of his complexion, and the agitation of his manner, during her communication.

Lady Blanche strove to be easy and unembarrassed ; and she succeeded so far as to make him believe her happy, and perfectly satisfied with the prospect before her.

He resolved to plead particular and sudden business — a summons from his father — a relation at the point of death — any excuse to depart the following day. This torture was not to be endured. Yet he wished to have an opportunity of speaking to her once, and of telling her how ardently he prayed for her welfare.

He left his room very early the next morning, and he perambulated the library, the saloon, the breakfast-room, the hall. He knew Lady Blanche was an early riser ; Cransley was renowned for the lateness of its breakfast-hour ; perhaps she would make her appearance before the other guests. He was not wrong in his calculations. Lady Blanche came into the drawing-room to look for her mother's work-basket, and was hastily retiring with it, when De Molton arrested her steps by saying, " that as he was obliged to depart in an hour, he was anxious to express to one, for whom he felt such esteem and admiration, his earnest wishes — his prayers for her happiness."

" You are not going to-day, surely, Captain De Molton ? " answered Blanche in a tremulous tone.

" I must," he said : " I could not, would not stay here another day, for anything this world can now offer me."

" Lady Westhope will be quite disappointed. She hoped you were come for ten days, or a fortnight."

" Such was my intention ; but circumstances — imperative circumstances, over which I have no controul, render my stay here — impossible."

" I hope no misfortune has occurred in your family ? " inquired Lady Blanche, thoroughly impressed with the idea of his indifference towards herself, and, consequently, by no means attributing his visible agitation to its true cause.

"No misfortune has occurred in my family," he resumed in a voice of deep emotion — "but one to myself. No — no! it is not a misfortune: on the contrary, it is the thing in the world I ought most to wish; it is the union of the two beings I most value, most respect, most love on earth! I ought to rejoice — I do rejoice. Believe me, Lady Blanche, though my voice falters, and I am at this moment weak, I rejoice that the friend to whom I am bound by every tie of gratitude and affection has gained the heart of the most perfect of woman-kind; and that the woman who alone in my eyes is perfect, is likely to be happy with a man who is all honour, truth, and uprightness. May Heaven in its mercy bless you both!"

The tears stood in De Molton's glistening eyes. They almost overflowed. "I am a fool," he added; "I thought I had more command over myself; I did not mean to torment you, to insult you, with an avowal of my hopeless, my presumptuous love!"

Lady Blanche had stood transfixed in fear, amazement, joy; — yes, joy! there are no circumstances under which it is not joy to find affection is requited. "And do you indeed love me?" she said, scarcely conscious of what she uttered.

"Do I love you! Lady Blanche, can you ask that question? In folly, hopelessness, misery, I cannot — cannot quell my love!"

"Oh, why — why did not you tell me sooner?" she said, earnestly clasping her hands.

"Tell you so? How could I venture, penniless as I am, without a home to offer you, — how could I have the insane presumption to ask you to share poverty — penury with me, when splendour, rank, wealth were courting your acceptance?"

"Oh, I despise these things! I always did! I never could care for money in all my life, and now!" — She stopped; her engagement rushed across her mind. She felt guilty of perjury and infidelity.

De Molton, in his turn, stood confounded; he had done everything he had especially resolved not to do, and, mingled with the delight he could not help experiencing at the avowal which had almost escaped Lady Blanche's lips, he felt humiliated by the base part he had acted towards the friend to whom he had meant to devote himself. He struck his forehead, and exclaimed, "Oh, Lady Blanche, I am a wretch

not worthy of a moment's regard ! Do not waste a thought on me ; forget me, or at least only remember me to bestow a sigh of pity on one who has been betrayed, by his love for you, into an act of ingratitude for which he abhors himself. Glenrith is my best friend,—he is the soul of honour, he—he is worthy of you !”

Lady Blanche was frightened at what she had said—frightened at what she had listened to. Voices were heard approaching,—the door opened,—Captain De Molton rushed into the adjoining library. Lady Blanche seized her mother's basket, and left the room before she had time to perceive who the intruders were. As she ran up stairs, she met Lady Westhope. “What is the matter, Blanche ?” exclaimed Lady Westhope, as her friend darted past her.

“Mamma wants me,” she hastily answered, as she took refuge in her mother's room.

“Mamma ! mamma !” she exclaimed, throwing herself breathless into a chair ; “I am wretched, guilty, and miserable ! I am the most unfortunate creature in the world !”

“What possesses you, child ? what is the matter ?” replied Lady Falkingham, as she put down the untasted piece of toast she held in her hand.

“Mamma ! he loves me after all !”

“Who, my dear ?—what ! Lord Glenrith ? To be sure he does. I never saw a man more attached in my life !”

“Poor dear Lord Glenrith, so he is ! Oh, how little I deserve that he should be so ! when I—oh, mamma, what will you think of me ? I have almost owned that my affections are—at least I implied—Oh, mamma ! what shall I do ?” And poor Blanche wept bitterly.

“Certainly, my dear Blanche, I do not consider it modest and becoming in any young woman to allow a man to perceive that he has acquired too much power over her heart ; yet, as you are on the point of marriage, I think you need not blame yourself so very much. There should always be a certain reserve of manner and expression ; but anxious as I am that women should preserve their dignity, and that no daughter of mine should condescend——”

“Oh, mamma ! you do not understand me : I never told Lord Glenrith I loved him.”

“What on earth do you mean then ?—what are you

talking about?" Lady Falkingham's countenance assumed an expression of alarm, wonder, and displeasure.

"Oh, how can I tell you? — you, mamma, who never did anything weak, or foolish, in your life! Do not look at me, mamma, with those stern and reproachful eyes, or I can never confess it."

"Blanche, you alarm me more than I can describe. Do you mean that you love any one better than the man whom you have accepted as your husband, — the excellent, amiable, high-minded Lord Glenrith, who is so sincerely devoted to you?"

"Oh, mamma! I do value him, and I render him justice, indeed; and I love him in a kind of way ——"

Lady Blanche was each moment becoming more alive to the ingratitude, the duplicity, with which she had acted towards Lord Glenrith, and began to wish she had not opened the subject at all to her mother.

"Explain yourself, Blanche," repeated her mother: "whom are you talking of? Is it Mr. Wroxholme, whom you met at Paris?"

"Oh dear, no, mamma. It is Captain De Molton!" And she no longer found any difficulty in speaking his name. Mr. Wroxholme might be a very good man, but, in her eyes, was immeasurably inferior to the object of her preference. Those who are in love, always resent as an injury the suspicion that they could find charms in any other than the one person to whose merits they are alive.

"Captain De Molton!" exclaimed Lady Falkingham; "why, I scarcely ever heard you mention him! You ought to have told me this before."

"I never knew till to-day what were his feelings towards me, mamma!"

"I must say your lover has chosen a good moment for avowing his passion! It proves an honourable mind! And he wishes to induce you to break off your marriage with a man in every way calculated to make you happy? For what? He has scarcely bread to eat himself, and his father has none to give him."

"He knows all that, mamma, and he is going away this moment. He does not ask me to marry him. He says he is not worthy of me."

“ Oh, Blanche ! Blanche ! and you allow this man, who tells you he cannot marry, to make love to you, while you are the affianced wife of his friend ! I should never have thought a daughter of mine would have acted in so improper, so unprincipled a manner. Heaven knows, I cannot accuse myself of having neglected my children. You have all had every attention paid to your minds and your morals. Each hour had its avocation ; you were never permitted to read a book which Miss Strickland or myself had not previously perused ; you were never allowed to walk beyond the shrubberies and the park ! If, like some mothers, I had neglected the essentials for the sake of accomplishments —— but the religion-master always came three times a week ! How on earth can such low notions of moral rectitude ever have found entrance into your head, or your heart ? ”

Lady Blanche was in despair at her mother's grief. She now viewed her own conduct with horror ; but how to meet Lord Glenrith, with this weight of guilt upon her mind ?

“ Look here,” continued Lady Falkingham ; “ read this letter ; all kindness and generosity —— receiving you into the family with joy, treating you already as if you were their daughter ! ” Lady Falkingham gave Blanche the joint epistle she had just received from Lord and Lady Wentnor, expressing every thing most gratifying concerning the choice their son had made.

Each word she read was a dagger to Lady Blanche's heart. “ I cannot overthrow all the happiness of these worthy people,” she mentally revolved, “ and that of my parents, and of poor Lord Glenrith. I must quell this foolish inclination, —— I must fight a good fight, and I shall conquer, I dare say. But it is hard, when now, for the first time, I know myself beloved.”

After a pause, she told her mother she would try to compose herself : she implored her not to mention the subject to her father ; she strove to persuade her mother, and herself, that it was only a passing feeling, a momentary agitation which would soon subside ; that it had been pique, that it was now gratified vanity —— any thing, in short, except love. Her mother was only too glad to be deceived, and assisted her in her self-deception.

Lady Falkingham would have been very sorry to lose so

estimable and so unexceptionable a husband for her daughter ; but the disgraceful *éclat* of breaking off an engagement openly entered into and acknowledged, was still more appalling to a person who had a salutary horror of being “ talked of.” She had herself passed through life with the highest character as a wife and as a mother. Her elder daughters had married at a proper age, and in a proper manner. She looked upon a young lady’s first love as a silly affair, which has more to do with the imagination than the heart ; and if any of her other daughters had ever felt a preference which had not received their mother’s sanction, they would never have ventured to confess it with that frankness which, in spite of the education just described by Lady Falkingham, was one of Blanche’s characteristics.

CHAPTER IV.

Now have I shewed you bothe, these whyche ye lyst,
 Stately fortune, or humble povertie :
 That is to say, now lyeth it in your fyst
 To take here bondage, or free libertie.

SIR THOMAS MORE.

CAPTAIN DE MOLTON had sent his servant to the neighbouring town to procure him a chaise, that with the least possible delay he might carry his project of departure into execution.

When he had in some measure recovered his self-possession, he made his appearance at the breakfast-table, and informed Lady Westhope that he was unexpectedly obliged to return to London, to arrange with his father some matters connected with his exchange from his present regiment, which, as Lady Westhope knew, was under orders for India.

This was strictly true, for he had resolved to insist upon his father’s suspending the application he was on the point of making for this exchange. He determined to proceed to India with his regiment. The unhealthiness of the climate, which gave his relations so much uneasiness, appeared to him, in his present frame of mind, a positive recommendation.

The company expressed all due disappointment at his sudden departure — all but Lady Blanche ; she was not present. Lady Westhope suspected something must have occurred, and

when she bade De Molton adieu, she pressed his hand with a mysterious kindness, which she meant should imply, "You are acting like a man of honour; I see you suffer, and I pity you."

She was confirmed in this opinion, by Mr. Wroxholme telling her he had found Captain De Molton in the library before breakfast, with his head leaning against the marble chimney-piece, and his countenance so pale and haggard, that he feared for a moment something dreadful must have happened. Lady Westhope recollected Blanche's hurrying manner of passing her on the stairs, and she pitied all parties.

Lady Falkingham's indisposition accounted for Lady Blanche's absence till the hour of luncheon, when she came down stairs with a feeling of kindness towards Lord Glenrith, awakened by the consciousness of having injured him. She scarcely ventured to raise her eyes from the ground, but her blushing manner passed for the modesty of a young girl on the eve of marriage. Lord Glenrith pathetically lamented the absence of his friend, and Lady Blanche quivered at the sound of his name, and then reproached herself for doing so.

Lord Glenrith showed her the letters he had received from the different members of his family. Blanche could not but feel flattered by the manner in which she was spoken of; could not but think the better of the son, and the brother, who was loved with such tender affection; could not but own she ought to be happy with the prospect of possessing such a father, mother, brothers, and sisters-in-law. Lord Glenrith in his own happiness perceived nothing wanting in her manner, and laughed, and talked, the gayest of the gay. His inward satisfaction did not render him sentimental, but his buoyant spirits made him inclined to be pleased with everybody and everything. He even forgot the dislike he had imbibed for Mr. Stapleford; and when his arrival that day was announced, he declared him to be a "devilish good fellow, though he was a sarcastic dog."

His flow of spirits was almost oppressive to Lady Blanche, yet she rejoiced he did not possess the sensitive tact which might have rendered him alive to every look of hers.

At dinner, Lord Glenrith was telling Lord Falkingham he had a famous brood-mare at Wentnor Castle, whose colt was likely to win the St. Leger.

“ Is your colt as clever as your old horse Perseus, Glenrith? ” asked Mr. Stapleford.

“ Ah! Perseus! by Jove, that is a horse! Never was a thorough-bred one so good for weight — and as active as a cat — such action! and such pasterns! None of your short pasterns the grooms are so fond of — but long enough to be elastic! He is a true Whalebone! ”

“ I am not sure, after all, I do not like Quirk still better,” Stapleford dropped out quietly, while a sly smile lurked in the corner of his lip.

“ Quirk is a singularly good horse! He has such bone, and such a constitution! ”

“ And that grey pony, Glenrith — you will never part with that pony? ”

“ Part with Yung-frau? not for three hundred guineas! ”

“ You are a fortunate man in your stud, Glenrith! ” remarked Stapleford, with a quiet, composed, and serious air, which to the unsuspecting Lord Glenrith was perfectly satisfactory, while the rest of the party, especially poor Blanche, were painfully aware he was playing on the one weak point of the amiable young Benedick.

Nothing lowers a man in the eyes of a woman so much as being made a butt, no matter whether the quizzer be a person for whose opinion she entertains any respect or not. It was unlucky that, at the moment the *heros de roman* lover had departed in magnanimous despair, the successful one should lay himself open to the quizzing of a dandy. Lady Blanche felt miserable — more miserable than when she parted from De Molton — more miserable than when she heard the jingle of his hack-chaise as it drove from the door — more miserable than when her mother’s statement of the case made her awake to the enormity of her misconduct — more miserable than when she resolved to drive her lover’s image for ever from her mind. Those distresses were at least elevated ones — this bordered on the ridiculous.

In the course of the evening Mr. Stapleford found himself near Lady Blanche. “ I must offer you my congratulations, Lady Blanche, and especially upon the good looks and the good spirits of the fortunate Lord Glenrith. His beaming and ruddy appearance shows that you have not been unnecessarily cruel, tormenting before you consented to make him the

happiest of men. It must give a person of your kindly feelings great pleasure to behold a face so redolent with joyousness ! ”

Every word of this speech was disagreeable. Poor Blanche did not admire a “ ruddy ” man — did not like an unsentimental lover ; and, above all, she did not like the implication that she had been

“ Won unwooed, or slightly wooed at best.”

Mr. Stapleford bore not the slightest ill-will either to Lady Blanche, or to Lord Glenrith. He enjoyed saying the disagreeable thing in the civilest manner possible ; partly because it is almost the only exercise of power which a person without house, or lands, or fortune, can indulge in ; partly because he liked to see what people really felt — and he thus frequently discovered the true state of their minds ; partly because he happened to possess the species of tact which enabled him to do it — and everybody derives pleasure from success of any kind.

The next day Blanche received a packet from Wentnor Castle. It contained some beautiful ornaments — offerings from different members of her future family, each accompanied by the prettiest note imaginable. Congratulations showered in from every quarter. All the numerous friends and relations of both sides wrote letters in which each party was described as perfection, and each as having met with perfection. It is astonishing that matrimony should ever fail to secure lasting happiness, when (if we may believe the written testimony of those who best know the contracting parties) none but paragons ever enter into the holy state. But among all the happy unions that have been joyfully anticipated, none ever gave more general satisfaction than the present. The age, situation, rank — everything was suitable. Poor Lady Blanche felt herself every moment more thoroughly hampered, entangled, and pledged ; and every moment her disinclination to the marriage increased.

It was an odd thing ! but Mr. Stapleford’s quiet manner of quizzing Lord Glenrith, and his imperturbable good-humour under it, — or rather, his perfect unconsciousness of what was happening, — hurt his cause even more than her preference of De Molton. She would rather have seen him angry and resentful ; to persons with *la tête exaltée*, the smallest shadow of

ridicule irrecoverably destroys the halo of romance they would fain throw around the object of their devotion. Blanche might have turned from her hopeless and youthful dream of love, to admiration, respect, obedience, and submission ; but when her head, her heart, and her imagination were possessed with the dignified brow, the melancholy eyes, the mellow voice, the lofty air, the noble grief of De Molton, to see the joyous, the “ ruddy ” Glenrith perfectly contented under the quizzing of a Stapleford, prevented her being able to work herself up to the feelings it was her duty to entertain towards him.

Mr. Wroxholme one day remarked to Lady Westhope, that Lady Blanche appeared to be extremely out of spirits, and that he almost feared her disposition and that of her future husband were not exactly suited.

“ She seems to take no pleasure in his country pursuits — she listens with an abstracted air while he continues to pour into her ear details which he might perceive are not interesting to her ; though I own I sometimes wonder she should not be more curious about Wentnor Castle, which, from the engravings, must be a magnificent and interesting place.”

Lady Westhope agreed with Mr. Wroxholme, and could not help half confiding to him, that she feared Lady Blanche had some other prepossession.

“ Poor girl ! ” resumed Mr. Wroxholme ; “ but then it is a thousand pities she should marry, if she cannot love, Lord Glenrith.”

“ He is such a good man ! ” answered Lady Westhope ; “ he has such excellent principles — he is so sure to make a true and faithful husband, that in the long-run I should hope no woman, who had herself good principles, could fail to be happy with him.”

Lady Westhope sighed, and Mr. Wroxholme, who had by this time heard and seen somewhat more of his host, felt that poor Lady Westhope spoke as one who had suffered from the absence of these qualities in her husband.

CHAPTER V.

Ever still must I adore thee :
 Though wide seas between us roll,
 Each fond thought shall hover o'er thee,
 And thine image fill my soul.
 Morning breaking o'er the ocean
 Will thine opening graces wear,
 And with evening's last devotion
 I will breathe thy name in prayer.

Unpublished Poems.

UPON leaving Cransley, Captain de Molton had hastened to town. He there found his father, who having left the rest of the family at Brighton, had also repaired to London for the purpose of effecting the proposed exchange.

Lord Cumberworth was preparing to enter a hackney-coach, which waited to carry him to Brookes's, where he meant to dine and to solace himself with a quiet game at tolerably high whist, when he was startled at the unexpected appearance of his son.

"Why, Francis!" he exclaimed, "I thought you were gone to Cransley for a fortnight! What brings you here?"

"I wished to see you, father, and to talk to you seriously concerning my prospects in life. You are come up about my exchange, are you not?"

"Yes — and I hope I shall be able to settle it all comfortably. Your mother has been in one of her nervous ways at the bare thoughts of your going to India."

"I think I ought to go, father."

"Why! which way does the wind blow now? Why the d—! did you not tell me so sooner? They have all been pestering me to come to town, and to leave no stone unturned to save you from this banishment, as you all called it; and now I have taken the trouble of coming, you change your mind! Upon my word, this is very inconsiderate. But, after all, I myself do not like your going into such an unhealthy climate, and I would rather keep you at home if I could. If you are to go into danger, let it be where some honour and renown are to be obtained. There is no glory in dying of a liver complaint, as yellow as a guinea."

"I am very sorry, my dear father, to have given you so

much unnecessary trouble, but I have fully made up my mind to sail with my regiment."

"And pray, Master Francis, what has worked this wondrous revolution in your mind?"

"Why, father, to tell you the truth, happiness is out of the question for me; and therefore I had rather do whatever will make me least burthensome to my family, and also take me out of the way for a time."

"And why do you want to lie perdue? You have not been running in debt, have you?"

"No, father; I am too well aware what are your circumstances."

"Not a scrape? eh, my boy!" — and Lord Cumberworth, whose morals were not puritanical, smiled. "It can't be Lady Westhope, she is such a prude. You have not been playing the fool, I hope?" continued Lord Cumberworth, putting more of parental gravity into his countenance.

"I have been guilty of nothing wrong in deed or thought," replied De Molton with seriousness.

"Egad! but there's a woman in question though," replied Lord Cumberworth. "You are not in any danger of marrying?" and his face really assumed an expression of sincere alarm.

"Not exactly, father; but I am unfortunately attached to a person who is on the eve of marriage with another."

"Thank heaven that is all!" exclaimed Lord Cumberworth. "Remember one thing, Frank — a man is never thoroughly undone till he is married."

De Molton remained silent. His father's tone of feeling was so little in unison with his own, that he wished to say no more upon the subject than was absolutely necessary.

"Does the girl like you, my boy?" added Lord Cumberworth.

De Molton was somewhat perplexed how to answer, but he said, "I told you, father, she was going to be married to another man."

"Ah! but women have married a rich man, when they have been in love with a poor man, before now. And you are a d——sh handsome fellow, and more like me than any of my children. Well, don't look so sheepish, like a bashful maiden yourself. Is the girl in love with you?"

"I conclude not," resolutely answered De Molton.

"Have you told her you are in love with her?"

"Why, yes, I have."

"And she was not angry, eh? Come, I suppose your nice sense of honour will allow you to say whether she is very much in love with her future husband or not?"

"I should say she esteemed him highly, but was not precisely in love with him," was De Molton's guarded reply.

"Wheugh — gh — gh!" with an elevation of the eyebrows, and a sound that ended in something like a whistle, was the response produced by this last communication of his son's. "You had better go, my boy. I see how it is: if you stay, we shall have the marriage broken off and the d—l to pay. Ah! well I am sorry to part with you, but you had better go — we will do no more about the exchange. But I am as hungry as a hound — I have eat nothing since I left Brighton. There is no dinner in the house — nothing in it but the old housemaid: we can't roast her — she would be tougher than Pedrillo. Let's be off to Brookes's. By the by, you don't belong to Brookes's: I remember you said it was too expensive, when George wanted to get you put up. Well, you can eat your dinner at your Junior United Service Club; and we will meet here, at home, at ten o'clock, and talk matters over quietly."

Lord Cumberworth got into his hackney-coach, and De Molton walked off to his club, to snatch a hasty morsel, and return to South Audley Street, there to ruminate sadly upon his future fate until his father should join him. There was much of bitterness in his reflections. He could not help repining at the unequal distribution of fortune, and thinking it hard that the happiness of two beings should be wrecked for lack of that contemptible thing, money. He almost doubted whether he was acting rightly by Lady Blanche in abandoning her when she had all but acknowledged her love for him. And yet, what could he do? His worldly pelf consisted but of his pay, and the very moderate allowance his father was able to make him. He had nothing to look to. His father's property was entailed upon the eldest son — his circumstances were embarrassed — he had been obliged to let Cumberworth Hall, and lived principally in London, making an occasional excursion to some watering-place: there was no chance of his

saving money, and there were twelve of them to divide the fifty thousand pounds settled on younger children. Lady Blanche certainly had no dislike to Glenrith, or she would never have accepted him : and who could know Glenrith, and not learn to value and to love his kind feelings and singleness of heart ? The more he reflected, the more strengthened he was in his purpose. When he was far away, she would assuredly forget the slight prepossession she had entertained for him, and she would soon give her whole heart to Glenrith. When he had brought his reasonings to this most desirable point, he found it infinitely more painful than any other view of the subject.

His father returned about ten o'clock, and after arranging to write immediately to the person with whom they had been in treaty for the exchange, and to lose no time in procuring the proper stock of articles necessary for the voyage, as there was a possibility of the regiment sailing within a fortnight, they agreed to leave London the following afternoon, and to join the rest of the family at Brighton.

" Well, cheer up, my boy ! " said Lord Cumberworth, as he bade his son good night. " There is no use in fretting — there are more pretty girls than one in the world, and you are not the first sentimental young man who has been crossed in love. *Il en faut passer par là.* We have all been crossed in love in our time. I, myself, was very much smitten with another woman when I married your mother ; but I saw that my marrying Helen was out of the question, and so I did what they all wished me to do, and it answered just as well. Your mother is a very good woman, Frank, and I am very fond of her. So cheer up, my boy — never be down-hearted ! You will forget your Dulcinea long before you cross the line." He was closing the door, when he turned back again to say, — " Frank, you look for all the world as if you were younger brother to the knight of La Mancha — *el cavaliere de la triste figura*, — with your pale cheeks and your high forehead. I would not be a skin of wine or a windmill in your way for something ! "

The good-humoured but unsentimental father chuckled at his own joke, and went off to bed so relieved that his son would be secured from the impending danger, that it quite reconciled him to his departure.

When they arrived at Brighton late the following evening, poor Lady Cumberworth was in despair at the prospect of her pet, her darling, the most affectionate, the most considerate, the most dutiful of all her children, running all the risks consequent upon a banishment to India ; “not only,” as she said, “braving perils by sea and perils by land, but those of climate and disease.”

“There are worse perils in England, Mary,” replied her husband with a knowing wink. “Perils by eyes are the most dangerous for handsome young fellows ! Depend upon it, he is far safer in the other hemisphere ; for peril by marriage is the worst of all—that is to say, when a man has nothing, and never can have anything as long as lives.”

De Molton shrunk at hearing his attachment alluded to among all the family circle ; though to his dear gentle mother he could have opened his whole heart, and to most of his sisters individually also. The eldest was grown a little starch, and the youngest was rather too young and giddy ; but the four middle ones had plenty of romance in them, and would have listened to his tale with tears in their eyes. To any one of them in a tête-à-tête he might have spoken his feelings ; but to have twelve curious, wondering, though kind eyes, turn upon him at once, was peculiarly unpleasant to a sensitive and reserved man.

Lady Cumberworth saw his distress, and hastened to say, “We were just going to bed when you arrived. I shall carry Frank off to have a quiet gossip with him ; so good night, girls !”

De Molton followed his mother, and in her found a sympathizing listener—one who entered into all his difficulties, and who was ready to love poor Blanche for appreciating her own dear Frank as he deserved. But she saw that, deeply as his affections were engaged, their union was impracticable ; and she was obliged, though most reluctantly, to confess that a temporary absence, and entire change of scene, were likely to spare his feelings and principles many a trial.

Lady Cumberworth entreated her husband not to annoy poor Frank by any allusion to his unfortunate attachment.

“Lord bless the fellow !” exclaimed Lord Cumberworth, “I never meant to annoy him ! I know he is d—shly in love, and that is all I said ! And I only said, he could not marry, and that he knows well enough !”

“He is unhappy, and we must refrain from remarks that wound his delicacy just now.”

“Delicacy—fiddlestick! You always did spoil that boy—and you will make him as full of feelings, and nerves, and refinement, as the most fanciful woman of you all!”

The young ladies also met in a nocturnal synod. “What is this love of Frank’s?” exclaimed Mary.

“How papa made him blush!” said Laura.

“And is he really going to India?” asked Charlotte.

“Who is the girl?” inquired Emily.

“And why could not mamma talk to him before us, I wonder?” added Katherine, the youngest, who was rather pert.

“When you are a little older, you will know that people do not like to discuss *les affaires du cœur en pleine salle*,” answered Jane the eldest; and with a dignified air she retired to bed.

“I suppose Jane wishes to persuade us she has some love affairs of her own, though we know nothing about them,” continued the merry Katherine: “she has preserved a most dignified mystery upon the subject, ever since I have been grown up.”

After a few more questions which could elicit no answers, seeing that all parties were equally in the dark, the sisters separated for the night, and all found the repose they sought except Lady Cumberworth, who acutely felt the approaching separation from her son, and still more the pain that darling son was doomed to endure.

Lady Cumberworth was not one who considered the sufferings of lovers as matter for sport;—she had been fervently attached in her early youth, and the object of that attachment had been snatched from her by death. On her side, as well as on her husband’s, their marriage had been one of reason and of expediency. But she had made him an excellent wife, had borne him a large family, and they had always been a happy and affectionate couple—happier, perhaps, than if one of the parties, and only one, had felt more warmly.

In a fortnight from the time De Melton joined his family at Brighton, he tore himself from the arms of his sisters, and, lastly, from the long, speechless, close embrace of his mother, to whose more sad and sacred affection all instinctively yielded the parting caress.

He sailed with his regiment, and we will leave him for a

while, losing the sense of all his romantic and high-wrought sensibilities in the absorbing sufferings often endured in the Bay of Biscay.

CHAPTER VI.

No te faltarà otra Dama
Hermosa y de galan talle,
Que te quiera, y tu la quieras
Porque lo mereces Zayde.

Spanish Romance.

THE visit of the Falkinghams at Cransley had now lasted more than ten days. Blanche ardently wished to be at home again. She felt wretched, hypocritical, and guilty. She found herself so uncomfortable where she was, that she imagined any change must be for the better. When they left Cransley, Lord Glenrith was to pay his parents a visit of a few days, and then to join them at Temple Loseley; after which they were all to proceed to London for the purpose of procuring the wedding paraphernalia.

Lady Blanche's depression became so evident, that even Lord Glenrith, although not an acute observer, could not avoid perceiving it. He was exceedingly flattered, and attributed it all to his approaching absence. He kindly consoled her. "I shall soon be with you again, Blanche. I love my father and mother dearly; but just now I do not think even they can succeed in keeping me above three days away from you. I hate the thought of leaving you, but it will be such a pleasure to meet again!—will it not, dearest Blanche? I think it will almost make up for the pain of parting; and then I suppose, I need not leave you any more. So we have nothing but joy before us." And he wondered his betrothed did not appear to be more consoled by this prospect.

He has handed them all into their travelling barouche, and he has thrown himself into his britska, and they have left Cransley in opposite directions. All the rest of the party had previously dispersed—all but Mr. Wroxholme, and he was going to town the next day. As he and Lady Westhope stood upon the steps watching the receding vehicles, they could not help communicating to each other their fears concerning the

approaching marriage. Lady Westhope was exceedingly out of spirits at poor Blanche's prospects, and Mr. Wroxholme entered into her feelings, with all the delicacy of a person with good heart and good taste.

As their barouche rolled smoothly along, Lord and Lady Falkingham fell into deep and earnest conversation: Blanche sat in the back seat, absorbed in her own meditations. The road lay through an open, hilly, and heathy country, watered by small rivulets, on the immediate banks of which were sometimes seen a solitary cottage, and, close around, a small patch of cultivated ground. It was a mild watery day, with little positive rain, but one in which the shifting lights and gleams of pale sunshine give a purple hue to the heathy hill-side, and a bright yellow to the green meadow, or the mossy swamp. Her eyes mechanically watched the varying hues, and at length fixed themselves upon a lonely turf-roofed hut in the valley below. "How peaceful must be existence in such a hut!" she thought within herself; "no worldly considerations, no aspirations after rank and situation, can there interfere with the affections. A strong arm and a willing mind are all that are required to authorize the peasant lover to seek the hand of his peasant mistress. Personal, individual qualities alone are considered, — not the adventitious recommendations of fortune. How much happier must be that rank of life, where love, and love alone, leads to an union which is to endure as long as life itself! Oh! if I could, in honour and in respectability, become the wife of De Molton, how willingly would I resign every luxury to which I have been born, and live in that very cottage, unnoticed and unknown! I think I could gladly perform even the household drudgery: I could feed the chickens and sweep the brick floor, and pile up the blazing faggots, and prepare my husband's evening meal—if that husband were De Molton!"

She gazed upon the cottage as long as it remained in sight, and almost felt as if she left a place that was endeared to her by habit, when a turn in the road concealed it from her view.

It may be much questioned whether Lady Blanche's view of the various conditions of life were a correct one, and whether there may not exist as much, or more, disinterested love in the higher orders than in the lower.

But her thoughts continued, "And feeling thus, shall I

promise entire, undivided, eternal love to another man? Has not my life been an enacted lie for the last fortnight? Can I make up my mind to continue for years and years this unceasing duplicity? I thought De Molton's image would have faded from my mind—I thought I should each day have become more attached to Lord Glenrith. I hear of so many happy wives who did not marry for love! But is this the case? No! his image rises to my mind's eye more frequently than ever, and I find my soul recoil more, every day, from poor dear Lord Glenrith's tenderness. I shall behave ill to him in breaking off the marriage, and I shall be called a jilt; but shall I not behave more ill to him by marrying him, when I feel as I now do? I will tell him the whole truth myself! It is a horrid alternative, but I cannot—I cannot marry him!"

The day after their arrival at home Lady Blanche communicated to her mother the resolution she had formed. Lady Falkingham was thunderstruck. Blanche had continued for the last week to admit of Lord Glenrith's attentions, and had never again alluded to her attachment, so that Lady Falkingham had convinced herself the childish affair had passed from her mind. She was inexpressibly grieved at the information; but she was a woman of principle, and could not insist upon her daughter's marrying, while a passion, which would become criminal, retained full possession of her breast. Lord Falkingham, as might be expected, was very indignant—perhaps more so at first than his wife had been; but when the first ebullition of anger was past, he was sooner able to resume his usual bearing towards his daughter. The days are passed, when any measures, beyond argument and persuasion, can be put into practice to force an unwilling bride to the altar; and argument and persuasion were of no avail with one who unequivocally declared that she had tried in vain to subdue her love for De Molton—that her efforts to return Lord Glenrith's affection were totally unavailing, and that, if she found herself his wife, she should be utterly miserable.

Two days had elapsed from Lord Glenrith's departure for his father's. On the third he was expected at Temple Loseley. There was no cross post; there was no time to write; and, indeed, Blanche thought she had rather tell him the whole truth herself, as she could better exonerate his friend from any blame, by word of mouth, than by letter.

Never did three persons await the coming of a gay and gallant bridegroom with more uncomfortable feelings. At the appointed moment on the third day he arrived, beaming with honest joy. After the first greeting, he slipped upon the finger of his love, with an attempt at sentimental mystery, a ring containing his own hair. He also brought from his mother the family diamonds, which, she said, would infinitely better grace the blooming young bride than the sober matron. Lord Glenrith exhibited them with some pride and great delight ; — pride at the family glories — delight at offering them to Blanche.

Never were diamonds received so awkwardly, and with so little apparent gratitude.

“ Why, Blanche ! you do not seem to care about the diamonds,” he said, in rather a mortified tone.

“ Indeed I am very, very grateful to Lady Wentnor for her constant, her unmerited kindness to me — so much more than I deserve ! ”

“ You are very modest, my dear Blanche ! Well ! I hope it is that you are so glad to see me, you cannot think about the diamonds ; and if that is the case I will forgive you, and so will my mother too, I dare say. I have been told many women love their diamonds better than their husbands : that will not be your case, I trust, or you will care very little for me.” He hurried off to dress for dinner, a little put out by the reception he had met with.

The dinner was most distressing. Lord Glenrith began, in the innocence of his heart, to tell them everything he had done, every arrangement that had been made, and how Lord and Lady Wentnor meant to visit Leamington for a few weeks, and to relinquish Wentnor Castle to them for their honeymoon ; but he found his audience so cold, that he in his turn became chilled and daunted.

As they left the dining-room, Lady Blanche summoned all her courage, and said, “ I wish to speak to you presently in the breakfast-room.”

The die was cast ! She must now tell him all. She seized her mother’s arm as they crossed the hall. “ O, mamma ! what a task I have to perform ! How could I ever accept poor dear Lord Glenrith, and plunge myself into this dreadful difficulty ? ”

“My dear, say rather, ‘How could I let myself fall in love with a man whom it is utterly impossible I should marry?’ — that would be more to the purpose. But it is too late now : there is no use in retrospection !”

It was not many minutes before they heard the dining-room doors open. Lady Blanche rushed into the breakfast-room adjoining, and in two seconds Lord Glenrith followed her. He saw something unusual had occurred, and he felt uneasy, but his mind never glanced towards what awaited him. “Well, Blanche, what in the world have you to say to me?” and he seated himself on the sofa by her side. “How glad I am we are once more quietly here, and no longer surrounded by simpering, quizzing acquaintances !” And there seemed a considerable danger of his attempting to put his arm round her waist. If he did meditate such a thing, his intentions were by no means carried into effect, for she started up to take her reticule off the table, and re-seated herself at the opposite side of the fireplace in an arm-chair.

“Lord Glenrith,” she said, “I have something upon my mind which has made me very miserable of late.”

“Miserable ! — you miserable, and I not know it ! What can I do, dearest Blanche ? You know I would go through fire and water to serve you.”

“Do not speak so kindly to me, — you make what I have to say more painful, more difficult. I deserve nothing from you but hatred and contempt.”

“What are you talking about ? Are you in your right senses ?”

“Scarcely, I believe ; for any other woman would think herself the happiest and most fortunate of creatures in marrying you ; and if I was to do so, I should be both wicked and wretched !”

“Not marry me, Blanche ! — you are dreaming. What can all this mean ? It is very unpleasant, though you cannot mean what you are now saying.”

“Indeed I do mean what I say ; and you cannot know how much I have suffered in coming to this conclusion.”

“This is strange — this is unaccountable !” and he passed his hands over his eyes, as if to make sure he was awake. “Have I done anything to change your opinion of me ? I am not aware of having been wanting in any way — and I am

sure, Blanche, I have loved you truly and sincerely." A tear glistened in his eye. "Tell me what I have done, and I will correct my fault. You are only saying this to try me ; and if so, let me tell you that it is a very foolish jest, and one entirely unworthy of you." The colour mounted into his face, and he looked for a moment extremely angry.

"No ! Lord Glenrith, this is no jest ! I am in sober, serious, most sad earnest. Your conduct towards me has been from the beginning ten thousand times better than I deserved ; but I should be treating you shamefully if I were to marry you when my heart — is another's."

"Your heart another's ! Did you say so ? Your heart another's ! Then why, on earth, did you accept me ?"

"Well may you ask that question, and well may I blush to answer it ! I thought my affection was unrequited, and I esteemed you. My parents thought more highly of you than of any one. I believed I should soon prefer you to the one person I had loved, as much as I already did to all common acquaintances ; and it was not till I found my affection was not unrequited, that I became aware of the depth and strength of my own attachment. I have been miserable ever since, and all I can now do is to tell you the honest truth."

Lord Glenrith sat with his eyes fixed on the ground. "This is a cruel blow !" he said at last ; "I have not deserved this from you, Lady Blanche. And who is the favoured object ? By heaven, it must be De Molton ! I remember his countenance at dinner the day he was at Cransley — how pale he looked, and how continually he strove to catch a view of you by the *épergne* ; and every time he met my eye, he looked in another direction ! I am born to be made a fool of—to be deceived by the friend I have loved from childhood, and by the woman to whom I would fain have devoted all the rest of my existence !" He hid his face in his hands.

"Blame me, Lord Glenrith, for I deserve your reproaches ; but your friend has never deceived you : Captain de Molton has always considered you more than himself."

"Then it is De Molton ! These are the actions dictated by his high-flown notions of honour ! A plain, matter-of-fact man would never have proved such a shabby fellow !"

"Captain de Molton shabby !" The word "shabby" sounded strangely on her ear when coupled with the name of

De Molton. She would have answered Lord Glenrith angrily, if the consciousness of how deeply she had wronged him had not checked her speech ; but she could rather have forgiven his calling her lover a black-hearted villain, than a "shabby fellow." — "Lord Glenrith," she repeated, "you wrong your friend. He carefully concealed from me his feelings till — till ——"

"Till you had promised to marry me !"

"Till he fancied the avowal of them could not endanger your happiness, or, as he imagined, mine. When he took leave of me at Cransley, he showed some emotion, which caused him to reproach himself for betraying feelings he had long concealed. Then first I learned he did experience any feelings which he wished to conceal, and this discovery produced a revolution in my mind which appalled me. I strove to blind myself as to the nature of my sentiments, I strove to conquer them, — in vain ; and now, what can I do, but throw myself on your mercy, and implore you to forgive me for having ever accepted the devotion of an honest man, whose affection I could not requite as it deserved !" She held out her hand to him.

"Oh, Blanche ! you break my heart !" and he kissed the hand which she did not withdraw : she felt a tear fall upon it. Her very soul seemed to melt towards the kind being to whom she was giving so much pain.

"Believe me, Lord Glenrith, when I tell you, that every sentiment of esteem, respect, and gratitude — every sentiment which my reason can command, is yours ; and that I esteem and respect you too highly to wish you married to a wife who cannot give you her whole heart. In a short time you will forget a person who has caused you nothing but disappointment and annoyance ; and you will find many, many girls who will esteem themselves fortunate in being allowed to devote to you their first affections. You will soon rejoice in the liberty I now restore to you. While I have nothing in store for me but contempt and ridicule, you will find, with some one far superior to me in all respects, happiness, which I must not hope for."

"Never, Blanche, never ! — I shall never marry !" And Lord Glenrith conscientiously believed what he uttered.

"Before we part, tell me that you forgive Captain De

Molton, and that you believe me when I assure you, that he never intended to interfere with your interests."

"Yes," he said, "I do believe you, and I will try to forgive De Molton."

Everything was said. Blanche felt that their return to the drawing-room was very awkward, but there was no other course to pursue. She led the way to the door — there was nothing left for Lord Glenrith but to follow after. He felt that something of ridicule always attached itself to his position; but at the same time he felt injured, and he tried to put a certain resolute and dignified air into his walk. He looked flushed and heated, his eye glanced suspiciously and uneasily from side to side, but he attempted to assume an unembarrassed deportment.

CHAPTER VII.

The smile that on thy lips erewhile
 So kindly wont to play —
 That could each idle care beguile
 Of Love's first golden day, —
 Now, when lone Fancy rules the hour,
 At evening's lingering close,
 Comes o'er my soul with mightier power,
 To soothe my real woes.

Unpublished Poems.

LORD and Lady Falkingham were seated, one on each side of the fireplace, awaiting the result of the conference which was taking place in the apartment within. They had been pathetically lamenting the folly with which Blanche was resolved to throw away the most desirable establishment in the world; and they had been indulging in unpleasant anticipations of what the world would say when it was known that a daughter of theirs was an avowed jilt. The door of the breakfast-room opened, and Blanche entered: Lord Glenrith followed close behind. Lady Falkingham perceived, at a glance, that the unacknowledged hope, which she had still cherished, of Lord Glenrith's eloquence prevailing at the last, was doomed to annihilation!

During their absence the tea had been brought in, and the urn was smoking and boiling upon the table. Lady Blanche

sat down before it, and rejoiced in her mother's old-fashioned fancy for having the tea made in the drawing-room.

Lady Falkingham and her daughter took the earliest opportunity of retiring for the night. Lord Glenrith lighted their candles, and opened the door for them. As they passed, Lady Falkingham pressed his hand with an expressive look of sorrow and of regret. Lady Blanche held out hers, and uttered in a low voice,—“We part friends!” He took her hand, and turned away.

When the door was closed, Lord Falkingham addressed him:—

“I am afraid, Glenrith, you have had a very unpleasant conversation with my daughter. I need not tell you how much my wife and myself regret the foolish fancy the girl has taken into her head. But what can we do? We cannot, in justice to you, urge her to fulfil her engagement.”

“I should be the last man to wish Lady Blanche's affections to be controlled; and I hope I know sufficiently what is due to myself, not to wish any woman to be forced into a marriage with me.”

After a few more words of regret and kindness on the part of Lord Falkingham, they also parted for the night.

The next morning all the jewels and trinkets which he had presented to Blanche were restored to him, and before the family were assembled round the breakfast-table he was several miles on his road to Wentnor Castle.

Lord Glenrith felt his disappointment keenly, for he loved Blanche. He felt his mortification keenly; for although not vain (if by vanity we understand a desire to show off in the eyes of others), still he entertained no mean opinion of himself. He had never in his life before met with anything but success. He had been accustomed to the admiring affection of his parents, the devotion of his dependants, the good-fellowship of his equals, the attention of his inferiors; and he had been early warned by his mother to be guarded in his manner towards young ladies, lest he should excite hopes which he could not realise—hopes which he found them, generally speaking, only too ready to entertain. Astonishment, therefore, almost equalled the other emotions to which we have alluded. He turned and turned in his head how he should break to his parents the result of the preceding evening's

conversation, and he felt that he equally dreaded their pity, and their indignation.

By degrees, as he got farther from Temple Loseley and nearer to Wentnor Castle, he found his love and his grief diminish, and his mortification and disappointment increase, till, by the time he reached the lodge, he thought he could have endured the latter, provided the publicity of his engagement had not exposed him, while writhing under the former, to the pity, the stare, and the jest, of great and small, rich and poor, old and young.

Blanche's first sensation, upon retiring to her room, was that of relief and freedom. She felt as though a weight of guilt and deceit was removed from her bosom, and she resolved she would now indulge herself in thinking of De Molton as much as she pleased. But the mortified expression of Lord Glenrith's countenance would rise up to her mind's eye ; and she found herself more occupied with him, and less with the image of De Molton, than at any other moment since their meeting at Cransley. She scarcely knew, whether satisfaction at having now done that which was decidedly honest, sincere, and unworldly, or self-reproach for having so wronged Lord Glenrith by ever entering into an engagement with him, ought to preponderate, —and, upon the whole, she found herself less happy than she expected.

The ensuing weeks passed drearily enough. Lady Falkingham was under the necessity of announcing to her friends and relations that her daughter's marriage was broken off; an occupation which did not raise her spirits, or smooth her temper. Of course the true reason could not be openly divulged, or all hope must be relinquished of Blanche's ever forming any other alliance. It is strange, but it is an undoubted fact, that a girl loses half her attraction if her maiden affections are supposed to have been in any degree touched ; while there is a peculiar charm attached to the idea of a widow, although it may be presumed she has known what it is to inspire, and to experience, all the emotions attendant upon love.

Blanche herself wrote to her sisters ; and as she felt that her rejection of Lord Glenrith bound her fate in some measure to that of Captain de Molton, she made no mystery of the prepossession which had rendered her incapable of doing justice to Lord Glenrith's good qualities.

She had scarcely despatched these letters, when she read in the newspapers the departure of De Molton with his regiment for the East Indies. He had sailed the very day of her final interview with Lord Glenrith. She experienced a blank sensation nearly allied to mortification ; forgetting what were the motives which induced him to seek safety and repose in another hemisphere.

Still, when she rejected Lord Glenrith, she did not quite anticipate that there was to be an end of everything. She had not precisely looked forward to sitting down quietly in deep retirement with her father and mother, till the arrival of another spring should summon them to London, there to be dragged the weary round of insipid entertainments, without the hope or the possibility of seeing the only face she wished to see. Her home was no longer what it had been. Lord Falkingham's vanity was mortified in the daughter of whom he had hitherto been exceedingly proud. Lady Falkingham, although not absolutely unkind, was cold and reserved, and never encouraged her to speak of feelings, which she always treated as a silly, unreasonable, youthful whim. On all occasions, the attachments of young people were spoken of in a slighting and contemptuous manner, which confirmed Blanche in her resolution to prove, that hers was not a passing fancy—but a real, sincere, and respectable attachment.

Captain De Molton, after a prosperous voyage, had arrived at Calcutta just about the time when the meeting of parliament called Lord Falkingham to London ; and Blanche with pain and disgust saw the bracelets, the trinkets, the jewels, which her various friends had given her upon her expected nuptials, packed up to adorn her person during the ensuing season. She felt she never could bring herself to wear these tokens ; for although it had been impossible to return any, except those which had been presented by Lord Glenrith's family, it seemed to her as if they had all been obtained under false pretences.

De Molton had struggled hard to bring his mind to a state of calm acquiescence in his fate. He had tried to accustom himself to the idea of Lady Blanche as the wife of Lord Glenrith ; he had used all possible means to divert his thoughts from his unfortunate passion ; he had occupied himself during his voyage with studying some of the Eastern languages, with

learning everything connected with Eastern warfare ; and although the renown to be gained in India at the expense of health, if not of life, falls far short of that gained in an European campaign, still he resolved that Fame should now become his mistress.

He had not been more than three weeks at Calcutta, when a letter reached him from his mother, which overturned all the good resolutions he had formed, and rendered him almost incapable of profiting by the opportunities which now offered themselves of perfecting his knowledge of Hindostanee or Sanscrit, or of putting in practice the tactics he had studied.

His mother informed him that the marriage between Lord Glenrith and Lady Blanche de Vaux was suddenly broken off, and that no cause was assigned for the event except that the lady "had changed her mind." She tried to persuade him that the case was as hopeless as ever for himself, and she resisted the temptation of telling him it was whispered that a preference for himself was the true cause of the rupture. Although she longed to communicate what she knew must give him pleasure, even she was aware that it would be weakness and folly to keep alive a passion to which no prosperous termination could be anticipated.

Her intelligence, however, was sufficient to inspire De Molton with an ardent desire to return to England. Lady Blanche was free : honour no longer called upon him to avoid her ; on the contrary, honour seemed to demand that he should now profess his anxiety to devote himself to her for life ; and he bitterly lamented having so rashly banished himself from his native land. Yet, upon his first arrival in India, he could not in decency apply for leave of absence. He suffered tortures of perplexity, doubt, and anxiety. At one time, he thought he would write to Lady Blanche, and regularly make her an offer of himself and of his fortunes. Then he shrank from doing so ; for what were the fortunes he was able to offer her ? and, moreover, such a proceeding would be assuming that it was for his sake she had broken off her marriage with Lord Glenrith, — a conclusion he had in fact no right to draw.

The news contained in his mother's letter was already six months old. Before his answer could reach England, another six months must have elapsed. What events might not have taken place in that time ! Lady Blanche would have passed

through another season in London : with her beauty, she must have been surrounded by admirers. It was possible, nay probable, that his letter might find her married, or on the eve of marriage with some one else. How ridiculous then would his conceited assumption appear in her eyes ! No — he would wait, at all events, for further information ; at the same time fully resolved to let slip no opportunity of returning home, when he might easily judge for himself whether an offer on his part would or would not be esteemed presumption. — Then again he thought, if for his sake Glenrith had indeed been rejected, how cold and how ungrateful must he appear, not instantly to avail himself of the chance afforded him. — Fortunately for him, his thoughts were necessarily in some measure withdrawn from his own annoyances, by his regiment being marched up the country, and by being engaged in some slight but animating skirmishes with the Pindarries.

The prospect of active service rendered his applying for leave of absence absolutely out of the question. All doubt upon that subject was thereby set at rest. It also seemed to set at rest the question whether he should or should not address Lady Blanche herself : — it was impossible to hint at her plighting her troth to him in a foreign land, from which he might never return, or of her keeping herself disengaged in the hope, at some future indefinite period, of following the drum with him from country quarter to country quarter.

He relieved his mind by writing to his mother a full statement of his perplexed feelings, and by imploring her, if possible, to convey them to Lady Blanche ; and having done so, he resolutely bent all his energies to the discharge of his professional duties ; while his heart beat high with the cheering hope of returning to her feet, his name coupled with deeds of valour, and illustrated by feats of military prowess.

CHAPTER VIII.

The soote season that bud and bloom forth brings
 With greene hath cladde the hyll, and eke the dale ;
 The nighingall with feathers new she sings,
 The turtle to her mate hath told the tale.

LORD SURREY.

THE "soote season" had arrived, and the Falkingham family were in London. Lady Blanche's heart sank within her at the prospect of the wearisome pleasures in which she would be forced to join. She shrank also from the idea of being looked upon in the light of a jilt.

Though Lady Falkingham, by her system of education, had not been able to subdue the natural warmth of Lady Blanche's feelings, or her somewhat headlong indulgence of them, she had succeeded in inspiring her with her own horror of being subject to the animadversions or the ridicule of the world, and Lady Blanche felt, more keenly than most girls, what is considered as a disgrace by all who have been well brought up.

She thought that the only mode of redeeming herself in the estimation of others was to adopt manners the most reserved ; and to justify, by her scrupulous fidelity to the object for whom it was now pretty generally understood she had rejected Lord Glenrith, the inconsistency from which she could not clear herself.

Lady Falkingham, whose most ardent wish was to see her daughter settled, was in a continual state of vexation at the distant and chilling manner with which Blanche received the most common attentions. There was truth in the charge her mother brought against her, of being on the defensive, even before she was attacked : and though there is nothing more attractive than the reserve which springs from innate modesty, Lady Falkingham knew full well, that few things more offend the self-love of men, and render them proof against the charms a woman may really possess, than the reserve which seems to proceed from contempt, or from a pre-determination to check their advances.

Blanche would gladly have passed her days in retirement, but her parents believed that the only mode of effacing the impression made by Captain De Molton was to place her in

the society of others. Moreover, to seclude herself entirely from the world, would be a tacit acknowledgment of deserving blame. At all the usual places of amusement they were consequently seen. But the calm brow of Lady Falkingham had acquired a careful and discontented expression ; and the bright glances and glowing smile of Lady Blanche had given place to a cold and stately pensiveness. She danced occasionally, but partners no longer disputed the honour of her hand. She sometimes received compliments ; nor did she dislike them, for as she felt an internal dissatisfaction, she would have enjoyed anything which tended to reconcile her to herself ; but she was so afraid of appearing to enjoy them, that she assumed a disdainful manner which effectually prevented any recurrence of what appeared to give offence.

With Lady Westhope alone did she find any comfort. To her she opened her whole heart — with her she talked over each trifling incident which had occurred during their visit to Paris — to her she repeated every word De Molton had said — to her she dwelt on his looks, his manner, his expression, in their last interview at Cransley. Lady Falkingham little guessed that the cold, the discreet, the immaculate Lady Westhope, could be a companion so little calculated to lead her daughter to a reasonable and worldly view of her own prospects ; — Lady Westhope, who, unknown to herself, was every day acquiring a more thorough conviction, that in mutual affection alone can a married woman expect to find happiness. Blanche's conversations with Lady Westhope tended not only to keep alive the impression produced at Paris ; they also made her feel still more pledged to adhere to the attachment which she professed.

It was about the middle of the season when Lord Glenrith arrived in London. He and Lady Blanche occasionally met at public places, in large and mixed society. Their first meeting was inexpressibly awkward. By some untoward accident, they found themselves *vis-à-vis* of each other in a quadrille. Although good breeding might prompt the fourteen or eighteen other people in the quadrille to withdraw their eyes from the pair who had once been lovers, their attention could not fail to be riveted upon them. They were to meet as friends ; consequently, they bowed when first they caught each other's eye ; and both blushed equally crimson. The rest of the time,

they advanced and retreated, performed their *queues de chat* and their *dos-à-dos*, without raising their eyes from the floor; but when poor Lord Glenrith was obliged in the *pastorelle* to figure before Lady Blanche as *cavalier seul*, she felt ready to sink into the earth with distress on his account as well as on her own. The effect which this position had upon Lord Glenrith, and the degree to which his pride and his self-love suffered under the gaze of others, may be deduced from the circumstance of his having that night resolved he would not long be seen in the light of a discarded lover, and of his having the very next day begun a series of devoted attentions to the lovely daughter of the Duke of L——. Before the London season drew to a close, the magnificent *trousseau* of the future Lady Glenrith was the general subject of conversation among young ladies; and the beautiful horses and equipages of Lord Glenrith that among young gentlemen.

Then came the morning when the narrow entrance to St. George's Church was crammed with lovely bride's-maids, and weeping, smiling relations; and the afternoon, when half the coachmen and footmen in the Park appeared with gorgeous favours in their hats; and the evening, when little morsels of tinsel ensconced in white satin ribbon were seen pinned to the side, or stuck in the button-hole, of all the most distinguished personages of both sexes.

Blanche and her affairs were utterly forgotten, and she heard on all sides descriptions of the loveliness of the bride and the happiness of the bridegroom.

In sober earnest, Blanche rejoiced that her anticipations with regard to Lord Glenrith had been so soon realised; and if she could have seen De Molton — if she could have heard him speak, — if she could have received any communication from him, — if she could have indulged any hope of ever herself knowing the happiness of reciprocal affection, she would have utterly despised the frivolous grandeurs which excited such a sensation in the London world.

But with her all seemed a blank. She had wished her story should be forgotten, — and it was forgotten. No one seemed to remember that she might have been in Lady Mary L.'s situation. She wished people to be aware that, though she had jilted Lord Glenrith, she was no flirt; — and she had succeeded! No one attempted to make love to her.

She was sitting with Lady Westhope, when Mr. Wroxholme, who had also been paying a morning visit, took his leave. "I have just heard what is to me a very melancholy piece of intelligence," said Lady Blanche. "Mr. Wroxholme tells me Parliament will sit three weeks longer. I feel so weary and so jaded with the joyless entertainments to which mamma thinks it her duty to take me! She fancies I may thus forget; but she is mistaken. My thoughts only recur the oftener to him from whom she hopes to wean them. I think, when among a number of indifferent people, one feels the want of the person with whom one would fain interchange thoughts and feelings, even more acutely than in the retirement of one's own home."

"That is only too true," answered Lady Westhope, with a sigh.

"This is to be alone — this, this is solitude."

"I like Mr. Wroxholme," rejoined Lady Blanche. "He looks as if he could understand one. I always feel at my ease with him."

"I told you you would like him! For my part I think he is quite an acquisition. I know no one who is *d'un plus doux commerce*. He has so much tact, and he is particularly obliging! One has but to express before him a wish for anything, and one is sure to find one's wish gratified."

"And then he has another great merit in my eyes: he cannot endure Mr. Stapleford."

"And I know of one more merit still," added Lady Westhope with a smile — "he likes Captain De Molton. They were schoolfellows, you know."

Mr. Wroxholme had been always interested for Lady Blanche and her lover, and, with the tact for which he was supposed to be remarkable, had from the first read her feelings. When her marriage had been broken off, Lady Westhope had not scrupled to speak confidentially to a person who had shown so much sympathy and kindness concerning her friend. Mr. Wroxholme had warmly approved of Lady Blanche's disinterestedness, and, naturally enough, had spoken his sentiments on the subject of worldly marriages.

He seemed to consider congeniality of tempers, tastes, and opinions, as the only objects to be sought in such a connexion;

and there was something to Lady Westhope's feelings singularly soothing and agreeable in hearing such sentiments so warmly expressed, especially as her strict notions of propriety could not take the alarm at a disprejudiced observer merely giving an opinion upon the affairs of a third person.

All he said breathed a tone of high respect for the sex in general — a generous horror of seeing a woman thrown away upon a man who was not worthy of her, or who did not sufficiently value her, which could not fail to be gratifying to a person who felt such to be her own case.

The indignation he felt at Lord Westhope's neglect of his wife, and the pleasure she took in finding herself appreciated, might gradually and unconsciously have led them both to entertain sentiments for which both would have reproached themselves, had nothing occurred to arouse them to a sense of their danger. An incident did however occur, which, though trifling in itself, served to open the eyes of one who had no wish to keep them wilfully closed.

CHAPTER IX.

Gentil parlar, in cui chiaro refulse
 Con somma cortesia, somma onestate ;
 Fior di virtù ; fontana di beltate ;
 Ch' ogni basso pensier del cor m'avulse.

PETRARCA.

LADY WESTHOPE'S praises of Mr. Wroxholme, and her intimation of his early intimacy with Captain De Molton, led Lady Blanche to talk to him with more satisfaction than to any one else. When in conversation with him, her countenance resumed some of its former animation ; and they frequently met, and always met with pleasure.

One evening Mr. Wroxholme had been recounting to Lady Blanche some boyish prank at school, in which he had contrived to let her know that De Molton had been engaged ; she had been listening with an expression of amusement, which had been succeeded by a look, half confusion, half tenderness, on the incidental mention of De Molton's name, when Mr. Stapleford remarked to Lady Westhope, " I think the con-

versation in that recess seems to justify the report I heard yesterday."

"What report?" inquired Lady Westhope.

"Why, that Wroxholme might succeed in consoling Lady Blanche for the loss of her penniless, as well as of her wealthy, lover."

"Oh, what an idea!" exclaimed Lady Westhope.

"I assure you the report is very general, and I think there can be no doubt but that Wroxholme is very much in love."

"There never was so unfounded a notion! What could put it into anybody's head?"

"Though no blue-stocking, I presume Lady Westhope knows enough of optics to be aware that the rays of light reflected from objects actually before us, passing through the different lenses of the eye, are impressed upon the retina, and are, by some process beyond the comprehension of us poor mortals, thence communicated to the brain: in plain English, Lady Westhope has heard the old adage, that seeing is believing."

His eyes, when he began to speak, were fixed upon Lady Blanche, who was diligently picking to pieces the bouquet she held in her hand; (Mr. Wroxholme was telling her what a good-hearted fellow Frank De Molton was at school, and how kind he had been to a poor boy who had been run over by a cart;) but as he finished his sentence, he withdrew his most penetrating and disagreeable eyes from the couple, whose feelings he, for once, misinterpreted, and let them fall gently and fixedly on Lady Westhope.

"I can assure you, you are perfectly mistaken in this instance," Lady Westhope replied with some quickness. "Lady Blanche is only likely to be perseveringly, foolishly, constant; and as to Mr. Wroxholme's being in love with her, it is quite out of the question."

"Why out of the question?" asked Mr. Stapleford, with the most provoking inatter-of-fact coolness.

Lady Westhope did not very well know why it was so; but she answered —

"Oh, he is not the sort of man to fall in love with Blanche."

"He is an odd sort of man, then, if it is out of the question for him to fall in love with one of the handsomest girls in London, who plucks off every leaf of a beautiful camellia

while he is talking to her ! A prepossession in another quarter might steel a man's heart even against such attractions as those I have alluded to ; and I have no doubt Lady Westhope is better versed in the mysterious workings of the human heart than I can pretend to be. I must bow therefore to her superior knowledge of the state of Mr. Wroxholme's affections ;"—and, with a supercilious bow, he joined a knot of politicians.

Lady Westhope felt prodigiously annoyed. She could not tell why she disliked so much to hear that Mr. Wroxholme was in love with Lady Blanche. There was no harm in it if he was. She looked upon him as a man with whom a woman might be very happy ; and, although not rich, he had a competency. Why was she so certain he entertained no particular preference for her friend ? and why did she feel aggrieved at the suspicion ? It could not be that, at her age, after having passed unscathed through all the trials of her youth, her own heart was in any danger ? What a humiliating, what a degrading surmise ! She felt almost ashamed of suspecting herself of such a weakness ; one that she would always have thought criminal, but that now would be ridiculous as well as criminal. It was evident, however, that Mr. Stapleford did suspect her of harbouring so ridiculous a prepossession, and she scrutinized her own feelings with resolute accuracy.

The truth was, that she had been accustomed for some months to feel herself the first object with Mr. Wroxholme ; and although no words ever passed which expressed, or implied, that such might be the case, it was that consciousness which made her find his society so agreeable. She had felt so secure that she was past the age when she need guard her heart from tender impressions, that she had relaxed in her former watchfulness ; she had felt so strong in her virtue, that she had not taken heed lest she might fall ; and it was with a sense of deep humiliation and self-abasement that she awoke to a conviction of her weakness. She thenceforth resolved to keep strict watch and ward over her inward feelings, as well as over her outward actions.

These resolutions were more easily taken than carried into effect : she had no right to assume coldness towards a person who had never given her the slightest cause of offence, who

had never presumed upon the intimate footing to which he had been admitted in the house.

How difficult is it, with the very best intentions, for a woman who lives in the world to steer entirely clear of suspicion, or misinterpretation, unless there exists between her and her husband a frank and cordial understanding! If, with all her knowledge of the world, Lady Westhope did not find it easy to shape her conduct so as to be discreet without prudery, and cool without unkindness, it is not surprising that the inexperienced should, without really deserving it, occasionally lay themselves open to blame.

The subject of love is one which young ladies are not allowed to discuss; at least, not with their elders. But how much have parents to answer for, who, by their avoidance of the subject, leave the responsibility of forming their daughters' minds on a point of such vital importance, to the man whom they may chance to marry! How much has the husband to answer for, who, by his neglect, his sternness, or his profligate notions, fails to become the guardian of the virtue he is bound to protect! Yet, by light conversation, by reporting gossiping anecdotes, and witty though immoral jokes, how frequently does he treat with levity, and make the subject of mirth and ridicule, errors, nay crimes, which hitherto the girlish matron has scarcely ventured to contemplate! Is it wonderful that the young mind should sometimes, when it fancies it only throws off the shackles of old-fashioned prejudice, discard at the same time the restraint of rigid principle? And the husband who has thus contaminated the fountain whence the actions flow, is surprised and indignant that the purity he once admired should have given place to notions more resembling his own! Is it surprising that a young creature, whose mind is thus deprived of ballast and of rudder, should in the voyage of life fail to steer clear of shoals and hidden reefs?

Fortunately, Lady Westhope had withstood the first trial,—that of being early united to an unprincipled man; and she had now acquired knowledge of the world, which enabled her to meet her present difficulty.

She debated within herself whether talking to him freely concerning marriage, and advising one, who appeared to entertain such exalted notions of the happiness to be found in

the wedded state, to enter into it himself, might not be a good mode of proving how completely she considered herself in the light of a friend, though of a kind friend deeply interested in his welfare ; but, upon the whole, she decided that it was entering upon a dangerous topic. It might be construed into the common artifice of coquettes to pique, or to lead to sentimental conversation ; and if, unknown to himself, he did entertain for her the feelings she more than suspected, it might open his eyes to the true nature of them, as Mr. Stapleford's insinuations had opened hers.

In her early youth she had made to herself a rule never to admit male visitors in the morning : but, since she had approached the middle age, she had gradually relaxed in the strictness of her prohibition ; and gentlemen now lounged on her sofas, and whipped their boots before her fire, as freely as in any other house in London ; and no one more frequently than Mr. Wroxholme. These visits, in the first place, she resolved to check ; but she knew that an explanation was always a thing to be most scrupulously avoided. By remaining late in her boudoir, and denying herself to all persons equally, on the plea of not being dressed ; by seizing every opportunity of taking an early drive into the country ; she for some time succeeded in her object, without wounding one whose only fault consisted in regarding her with respectful partiality. When he did find her at home, she received him cordially, and he was for the moment re-assured that she had not intentionally avoided his society. When they met in public, though she spoke to him but little, she carefully preserved the tone of friendliness and intimacy.

Still, in the long run, gently and gradually as the change was made, Mr. Wroxholme perceived that there was a change. He could not but become aware that he was less frequently invited to dinner ; and when invited, that it was to large set parties, and not to the hasty repast before the play, the friendly gathering of a few intimates ; and he could not but be struck with the numerous avocations and engagements which so often prevented his finding Lady Westhope at home of a morning.

In the course of time, he became hurt and half angry. He had always heard that fine ladies were apt to be capricious, and his pride was wounded : he was a gentleman in mind, in

manners, and in birth ; and his spirit rose at the bare suspicion of having been so sported with. He, in his turn, avoided Lady Westhope, and this was the severest trial she had yet met with.

They still, however, occasionally met ; for both parties wished to preserve the same demeanour towards the other. Mr. Wroxholme took an opportunity of expatiating upon the meanness of those men who could condescend to be toad-eaters and hangers-on of the great : “ He had no notion how any one with the feelings of a gentleman could endure being take up, and set down, at pleasure ; ” and asserted, “ that a man who could submit to such treatment, amply deserved to meet with it ! ” There was a tone of asperity in his mode of speaking which proved that his was not a general observation on men and manners, but that he spoke from personal feeling. She was inexpressibly hurt, and she determined she would, by some means, let him know she was not one of the heartless fine ladies to whom he alluded.

The evening before their departure for the country, she invited a few friends to meet at her house ; and, among others, Mr. Wroxholme. She had formed no distinct plan ; and yet she vaguely hoped she should be able to undeceive him, and to correct the impression he had so erroneously received of her late conduct.

Notwithstanding his wounded pride, he could not resist the temptation to pass one more evening in her society.

The party was small, the conversation general : subjects of literature were discussed ; the novels of the day were naturally mentioned. From them she easily led the discourse to the French novels of the day that is passed, and she took the opportunity of remarking how just were the little observations and reflections with which they were often interspersed. Mr. Wroxholme added, that in knowledge of the smaller workings of the human heart, he thought Madame de Genlis was scarcely inferior to Madame de Staël.

“ But none of Madame de Genlis’s are equal in power to Delphine,” replied Lady Westhope.

“ Are you a great admirer of Delphine ? ” inquired some one.

“ A great admirer of the eloquence and fire with which it is written ; and if the motto at the beginning is borne in mind, the truth of which is forcibly exemplified by the fate of

both the hero and heroine, I think a great moral truth may be extracted from it ; though I grant that the charm thrown around immoral feelings might render it a dangerous book for the young."

"And what is the motto?"

"*'Que l'homme doit braver l'opinion, la femme s'y soumettre.'* All the miseries of Leonce and Delphine arise from their neither of them following the maxim contained in the motto. How fortunate it is for us women, that the opinion of the world, and virtue, always prescribe the same line of conduct! There are many occasions in which it is praiseworthy, nay, admirable, in a man to risk the censure of his fellows ; many in which he may act ill without risking it. But with us it is quite different : it is seldom that we incur the condemnation of our own consciences, or the disapprobation of others, if we avoid not only what is really wrong, but that which may bear the semblance of wrong."

"Well," interrupted a young man present, "I think it is enough for man, or woman, to do what is right, and to leave appearances to take care of themselves."

"I am glad it is a man, not a woman, who says so," resumed Lady Westhope, smiling. "I am always grieved and alarmed when I hear a woman speak with contempt of the opinion of the world : it argues in her neither good feeling, cleverness, nor true courage. True courage (in woman) consists in at once giving up what may be agreeable and innocent in itself, rather than risk having one's good name called in question."

Mr. Wroxholme had listened with interest, for his attention had been arrested by the earnestness with which Lady Westhope spoke. He suddenly understood all that had previously puzzled him in her conduct. He admired and respected her ; and his wounded pride, his offended vanity, were soothed.

When she bade him adieu, she expressed a hope that he would join their Christmas party at Cransley ; she did not invite him for partridge-shooting in September, as she had done the previous year. He felt that she meant to be kind, yet firm ; and although the intervening six months appeared to him immeasurably long in perspective, he had too much principle himself to blame her, or to repine.

There was a cordiality in the respectful devotion with which

Mr. Wroxholme took his leave, which convinced Lady Westhope that he no longer looked upon her as a capricious fine lady, but as a woman of rigid, uncompromising virtue.

She felt, however, lowered in her own estimation when she could not disguise from herself how great an effort it cost her to exercise this same virtue ; and she was indignant, almost disgusted, with herself when she found her home cheerless, and her time unoccupied, upon her arrival in the country. This very feeling roused her to shake off the disgraceful weakness ; and she resumed her wonted employments, and strove to make to herself new ones.

CHAPTER X.

And words of small import, but tinged with gall,
 Jar on the sense by their unkindly tone.
 The morning greeting may sound harsh withal,
 The evening benison a curse may own ;
 While oft a smile — a kindly look alone —
 Born of compunction, falls right soothingly
 On the sick heart, the past offence t'atone,
 Ere word be spoke at all. As violets shy,
 By their sweet breath betray where they are lurking nigh.

Unpublished Poems.

THE events of the last few weeks in London had also awakened Mr. Wroxholme to the state of his own affections ; and he no sooner admitted to himself that he had been in danger of liking Lady Westhope too well, than he rejoiced in the prudence and discretion with which she had checked his growing preference, and felt grateful that he had been preserved from the danger which beset him.

During the period when London is nearly deserted, and that the few who are still detained in its dreary and dirty streets are naturally drawn into habits of closer intimacy, he was much thrown with the daughter of an eminent lawyer, with whom he often had professional intercourse.

He fancied a considerable resemblance to Lady Westhope's in the profile of her nose : her complexion was of the same tone ; and he perceived a decided likeness in the setting on of the head.

When Christmas arrived Mr. Wroxholme wrote an excuse to the Westhopes, informing them that he was on the eve of

marriage with the daughter of Sir H. B——, and that the arrangements attending this happy event must detain him in London. He told Lady Westhope that his future bride bore a strong resemblance to herself in outward appearance, and that he only hoped she might take her as a pattern in more essential qualifications.

How did Lady Westhope feel upon the reception of this letter? She felt exceedingly surprised, for experience only can teach woman how short a time love can survive hope in the heart of man; but she felt satisfied, nay relieved. She had for six months devoted herself to the performance of her duties, — she had repelled every weak emotion. She rejoiced that Mr. Wroxholme should be happy, she rejoiced that she would no longer be called upon to keep strict watch and ward over her own heart, and she was gratified by the manner in which he spoke of herself. The likeness which he professed to discover in Miss B. was a balm to her vanity, and prevented its obscuring her reason. She was therefore able to rejoice, as her principles pointed out she ought to do, that they had escaped all further trial.

While Lady Westhope was thus regaining tranquillity and self-esteem, Blanche toiled through a long summer of very fine weather and the usual country occupations, — through a long autumn and its shooting-parties. She had to listen to the number of head of game killed at battues, or to the merits of the young hounds or of the new huntsman; and she conscientiously danced through the winter balls at the county town.

In some respects she gave great satisfaction to the neighbours. No one could accuse her of showing the slightest preference for the most distinguished young heir apparent over the most Tony Lumpkin-like son of the most humble country squire, or the most penniless young curate, who might summon courage to ask Lady Blanche De Vaux to dance. Indeed, the more out-of-the-question the partner, the more gracious was Blanche; so that the popularity of the house of Falkingham was greatly on the increase. Unfortunately there was no son, or his chance of being returned for the county would have been considerably augmented: Lord Falkingham's family consisted only of daughters, among whom his personal property would be divided; while his whole landed estate would descend, with the title, to a nephew.

A second spring arrived. To London they went again. The brilliancy of Lady Blanche's complexion was gone ; her step had lost its elasticity, her figure something of its roundness. The last month or two had been to her a period of much uneasiness, much mortification.

She had calculated that the intelligence of her marriage having been broken off, must have reached De Molton, and by this time she might have received from him a passionate expression of his joy and his devotion. Day after day elapsed and no letter arrived. It is impossible to say whether, suffering the pangs of (as she imagined) unrequited affection, she might not have found a remedy, as it were, in the very excess of the disease, had not a circumstance occurred which again excited hope.

Even in woman, love can seldom exist if completely deprived of aliment, though it thrives upon the very smallest portion of sustenance imaginable.

Blanche frequently met Lady Cumberworth and her daughters in society : the very sight of De Molton's mother caused a tremor and an agitation which roused her from the state of apathy into which she had fallen. Moreover, she often perceived Lady Cumberworth's eyes fixed upon her with a kind and motherly expression ; and she even fancied she looked as if she longed to speak to her, although they had never been regularly introduced. Lady Falkingham watched with a jealous eye every symptom of intercourse with Lady Cumberworth ; and if they found themselves within speaking distance of De Molton's mother, never failed to move to the other side of the room.

One morning Lady Falkingham complained of a cold, and promulgated at breakfast that she should not go to Mrs. Baltimore's party that evening. Now Mrs. Baltimore was a relation and a particular friend of Lady Cumberworth's. Blanche quickly replied, " Oh, do not run any risk on my account, dear mamma ! You know Lady Westhope can chaperon me."

" Bless me, Blanche ! " exclaimed her father ; " you, wishing to go out, and your mother to stay at home ! I am delighted to find young and old are resuming their natural characteristics."

" Really, Blanche," said Lady Falkingham, " I think you are

the most perverse girl I ever knew. Every evening I am obliged to urge you to go and dress, to drive you by force to the best parties in London ; and the one only night I would rather stay at home, you are seized with such a fury of dissipation, that you wish to send all over the town to find a chaperon ! Nothing I dislike so much as that a girl should be hawked about, one night with one person, and the next night with another !”

“ But surely, mamma, sending to Lady Westhope is not sending all over the town ; and I was so long with her at Paris, that it is not like going out with a stranger.”

“ Don’t talk to me of Paris, Blanche, if you wish me to be able to eat any breakfast ; the sample she gave of her chaperonage there, is not calculated to make me anxious to entrust you to her again !”

“ Really, my dear, I think it is you who are rather perverse : you often find fault with Blanche for wishing to shut herself up, and for not exerting herself to recover her spirits, and now you check her when she attempts to do what you so often urge. I have some business with Lord Westhope this morning, and if I find Lady Westhope at home, I cannot see any objection to my asking her to take Blanche to-night.”

Lady Falkingham could say no more : she could not, before Blanche, explain her objections to Mrs. Baltimore’s party. She resolved, however, to risk a fit of rheumatism, rather than allow her daughter to elude her vigilant eye.

Lord Falkingham quickly settled the evening arrangements with Lady Westhope, and as quickly took his leave, to avoid the formality of a wedding visit from Mr. and Mrs. Wroxholme, who had just returned from passing their honey-moon in the country

Lady Westhope was exceedingly surprised to find Mrs. Wroxholme small and slender, whereas she herself was tall, and was altogether a fine woman rather than a pretty one. She was also surprised to find that her mouth was wide, (though her teeth were so bright, and her smile so sunny, that no one who spoke to her would be disposed to criticise it too severely,) whereas Lady Westhope’s was peculiarly small, and classical in its form. The setting on of the head was concealed by the winter apparel ; and Lady Westhope was not sufficiently well acquainted with her own profile, to be struck with

any resemblance in Mrs. Wroxholme's. She scarcely knew whether or not to be flattered at Mr. Wroxholme's having fancied a likeness where so little existed; and yet it proved that she had been present to his thoughts, and that he could not admire any one without trying to discover in her a resemblance to the person he had fixed upon as the type of female perfection.

Mr. Wroxholme looked the happiest of the happy. Mrs. Wroxholme was modest without being awkward, and did not seem to be indisposed towards her husband's friend, as is so frequently the case when the husband has injudiciously praised, or the woman has a narrow mind or a jealous disposition. On the contrary, she seemed disposed to take it upon trust, that the person of whom her husband approved must be deserving of esteem.

Lady Westhope was much pleased with all she saw of the bride in this morning visit; and she was gratified by her evident inclination to like, and her desire to be liked. When they were taking leave, she took an opportunity of expressing to Mr. Wroxholme, how much she was flattered at his having found any resemblance between so charming a person as his young wife, and herself. Mr. Wroxholme looked surprised, and wholly unconscious to what she could allude; then suddenly recollecting himself—"Oh yes, so I did! I thought Emma very like you when first I knew her; but I have not been so much struck with the likeness of late."

The truth was, that since he had become so exceedingly in love with his wife, as he now was, he had utterly forgotten what had at first been to him her greatest attraction. With the generality of men, love, when once over, leaves not a trace behind. With women, on the contrary, a person whom they have once loved, or even one by whom they once believed themselves to be sincerely loved, remains to them an object of interest, though the sentiment itself may long have ceased to exist.

Lady Westhope felt almost abashed when she replied in an explanatory tone—"I should not have had the vanity to make such a remark, if, in announcing your marriage, you had not yourself mentioned the resemblance."

Mrs. Wroxholme, who caught what was passing, said with such an air of honesty, that she was "really distressed at

hearing the comparison made," and looked as if she sincerely thought Lady Westhope so much handsomer than herself, that Lady Westhope felt gratitude towards the wife, mixed with a momentary (it was but a momentary) emotion of pique towards the husband.

To Lady Falkingham's infinite annoyance, her cold increased towards the evening—she was threatened with the tooth-ache—the night was extremely cold; she could not, without openly saying she would not trust her daughter out of her sight, insist upon accompanying her to Mrs. Baltimore's; neither was her illness such that she could make it a pretext for keeping Blanche at home.

Meanwhile Blanche looked unusually animated at dinner, and her father rejoiced exultingly to see her dark hazel eyes sparkle once more with the rich lustre which was natural to them. Lady Falkingham, on the contrary, was suffering, and uncomfortable, both in body and mind. Her tone was querulous; and she found it impossible to agree either with her husband or daughter upon any subject, whether of literature, society, or politics. She felt provoked and oppressed by the unaccountable spirits of both father and daughter.

Lord Falkingham had been trying to talk his wife into good-humour, and, nothing daunted by the ill success which had as yet attended his efforts, he proceeded: "I find Mapleton is quite sure of the county if he stands next election."

"That is very odd!" said Lady Falkingham: "Mr. Evans told me that Mr. Talpoys had eight hundred votes to spare."

"Well! Mapleton himself told me he had more than fifteen hundred to spare."

"I do not believe Mr. Mapleton knows anything at all about the matter. He believes what his agents tell him; and they wish him to persist in his opposition to Mr. Talpoys, that they may make their own perquisites."

"Mapleton must be a great fool if he is so taken in."

"I never heard he was clever," answered Lady Falkingham, with a sarcastic smile.

"How pretty the new lamps look!" remarked Lady Blanche, who knew that her father had a regard for Mr. Mapleton, and did not like to hear him spoken of slightly. "I think they give a most agreeable, soft light,—do not you, mamma?"

"I cannot say I agree with you, my dear. To my mind, they are not near so pretty as the old ones."

Lord Falkingham, who always felt a vague uneasiness whenever he saw his wife look out of spirits, as he amiably termed and thought what others might have deemed being out of humour, made another attempt to say something agreeable.

"Is that pretty cap the handiwork of your new maid, my dear? If it is, I think she is likely to suit you."

"My dear Lord Falkingham, you mean to be very complimentary, I dare say; but it would be infinitely more complimentary if you had recognised the old friend you have seen me wear half the winter at Temple Loseley."

This was another failure; but he laughed at his own mistake, said he evidently was not born to be a milliner, and remarked what a good *vol-au-vent* he was eating.

"I am glad you like it. I thought it very bad, I must confess, and had meant to speak to the cook about it; but I will tell him you approve."

Lord Falkingham was provoked at last. He piqued himself upon his taste in gastronomy, and did not at all like any one presuming to have a more refined palate than his own. Little more was said.

Blanche counted the moments till Lady Westhope called for her, with something of the same eagerness she would have done had it been De Molton, instead of De Molton's mother, whom she expected to meet.

To her great joy, the first person she saw on entering the room was Lady Cumberworth; and she felt, she knew not wherefore, that this evening was big with events of the utmost importance.

CHAPTER XI.

So, bounding o'er the billows, ride our fleets,
To reach the land that owns the sacred name
Of home; and high among the shrouds brave hearts
Beat towards that home with strong tumultuous joy.

Unpublished Poems.

LADY BLANCHE and Lady Cumberworth were at opposite ends of the room. They were not acquainted with each other.

Rubber after rubber was played by the elder people ; some of the younger won and lost considerable sums at *écarté*. The evening wore away ; Blanche's high-wrought expectations seemed likely to end in nothing. " After all," she thought, " what did I expect ? What was to happen ? How foolish I have been ! Lady Cumberworth does not even turn her head my way." She might have seen that a very charming young man was in deep conversation with the fourth Miss De Molton ; and Lady Cumberworth would not have moved an inch, or even looked as if she could ever wish to move, as long as this conversation lasted. When the charming young man had, however, taken his leave to grace some more splendid assembly with his presence, Lady Cumberworth changed her position, and crossed to the side of the room where Lady Blanche stood. She was slightly acquainted with Lady Westhope, and seated herself by her. Blanche's heart beat quick — something would surely occur now.

Presently Lady Cumberworth begged Lady Westhope to introduce her to her cousin, Lady Blanche ; which commonplace ceremony was performed in the most commonplace manner : but Lady Blanche's eyes were full of tears, and she blushed to her very temples. Lady Cumberworth saw that her darling son was as truly loved as ever, and, though she knew it would be reckoned imprudent, she could not help ardently wishing to let her know that De Molton was neither faithless nor indifferent. " After all," thought she, in the good-natured weakness of her heart, " it is evident they are both so deeply attached, that they never can be happy if they are separated. Lord Falkingham is rich — he has no son ; if he chose to provide for Lady Blanche, he could make them tolerably comfortable. I must give the poor girl pleasure by letting her know what are Frank's feelings ; and then he will be so very happy if I tell him I have seen his Blanche, and that she is constant !" She took the opportunity of Lady Westhope's changing her position to draw nearer to Lady Blanche. " Now," thought Blanche, " something is coming ; Lady Cumberworth looks as if she did not wish my cousin to hear."

Lady Cumberworth asked her " if she had been at the last ball at M. House." Lady Blanche answered " Yes," and felt disappointed at so unmeaning a question.

Lady Cumberworth did not know how to open the subject. "Were you much amused?" she inquired.

"No! I did not think it was very gay," was Blanche's reply.

"I had a letter from my son in India the other day," continued Lady Cumberworth, while Lady Blanche's heart seemed almost to stop its pulsations from excess of emotion, "and he tells me the society of Calcutta is very dull. He is gone up the country now, on an expedition against some native chiefs."

Lady Blanche changed colour, and her eyes turned fearfully and inquiringly on Lady Cumberworth, who proceeded:—"He soothes my maternal fears by telling me that it is not a service of much danger; but he adds, that while there is any active service to be expected, he cannot, in honour, follow his own inclination, which would be to return to England instantly. He seems very much to regret having gone to India at all."

This was enough. Hope again danced in the heart of Lady Blanche; but she dared not raise her eyes from the ground; she did not utter—she could not think of anything which would not too openly commit her to a person who was, in fact, a stranger. But Lady Cumberworth saw enough to convince her that Frank's devotion was amply requited, and she absolutely loved Lady Blanche. She was a kind, nay, a tender-hearted woman. She never could resist doing the thing which she saw wished by others, and many a lecture had she received from more sage and worldly matrons for allowing her daughters to flirt uselessly, and for permitting herself to be completely managed by them upon most subjects. Several very imprudent marriages had been in question for the girls, and had from her met with little discouragement. Fortunately Lord Cumberworth's heart was not so soft, while his head was somewhat harder.

From this time, whenever Lady Blanche and Lady Cumberworth met, a few words of cordial recognition passed between them. Lady Falkingham, to avoid the necessity of being introduced, was either affectedly engaged in earnest conversation with some one else, or stately reared herself to her full height, her eyes looking over, or beyond, Lady Cumberworth. The greetings, consequently, became each evening shorter and more constrained; but still they were sufficient to keep Blanche's mind engaged with the idea of De Molton.

The letter which his mother wrote to him immediately after her conversation with Lady Blanche, found him one sultry day lying in his bungalow, exhausted both in body and mind. The expedition against the Pindarries was over. He had distinguished himself by his eager and ardent courage, and his previous study of the history and nature of the country had enabled him to be of essential service to his commanding officer. The novelty and excitement of this desultory warfare had assisted to divert his thoughts from dwelling exclusively on the subject of his unfortunate attachment; but that excitement was over. The regiment was at present established in bungalows, near the borders of the British possessions, and removed to a great distance from any European society.

The weather was so oppressively hot, that, except for some hours about sunrise, and for a few more in the evening, it was impossible that even any military duty could take place.

The intervening space of time was generally passed by the officers languidly stretched on mats, and gasping for breath. They were cut off from all communication with any of their countrymen, and the unhealthiness of the climate had wofully thinned the number of those who had originally formed their small society. The few books possessed by the party had been read and re-read a hundred times. An occasional tiger-hunt before daybreak, — the exhilarating intelligence of a crocodile having been seen on the bank of a neighbouring tank, — the punishment of some native discovered in one of the thefts, which were so often perpetrated and so seldom detected, or the death of another comrade, — were the only events which occurred to vary the monotony of De Molton's existence.

In the vacuity of such a life, the image of Blanche would rise before his mind, more beautiful, more fascinating than ever; and he would pass whole hours with his eyes fixed upon the blinds which the natives were constantly watering to preserve some freshness in the atmosphere, while his thoughts wandered far away from the melancholy and uninteresting sights around him, to the festive and brilliant saloons of Paris, or to the dimly-lighted stairs of the private-box entrance of Covent-Garden, or to the long dinner-table at Cransley, with the épergne and its projecting flowers, — or, dearer than all, to the library where he last beheld her, — where he caught the expression of her countenance when she said, “And do you

then love me ? ” — to the library where she had uttered the few words which had changed the whole tenour of both their fates — “ Why did you not tell me this sooner ? ”

He was feasting his memory on these precious recollections ; he was wondering whether she still remembered him, whether he should ever return to England, whether he should find her free from any other engagement — whether there was a possibility that she might ever become his, or whether he was not flattering and deceiving himself in attaching so much importance to these few words ; — when he was roused from his reveries by the arrival of despatches from Calcutta with English letters, and his eyes were greeted by the sight of many a well-known handwriting.

It is only those who have been in distant lands, far from all most dear to them, who can judge of the mingled emotions of joy and fear with which letters from home are received by the exile. The magic contained in that word Home ! — the thousand tender, delightful, and painful feelings that crowd upon the soul ! The anxiety with which the letters are hastily examined to see that they are not sealed with black, — the eagerness with which the one from the person nearest and dearest to the heart is selected from all the rest, — the sickening agitation with which it is torn open, and the nervous haste with which the eye glances to the top of the page to look for the accustomed “ All well,” and the glow of delight with which the comfortable words are hailed !

De Molton seized his mother’s letter, — perused the assurances of the welfare of his father, his brothers, his sisters, his uncles, his aunts, his first cousins, and his second cousins ! Nothing could be more satisfactory than the report his mother gave of every branch of the family, and yet he was not satisfied.

At length came the postscript ; and there he found the name he had been longing to see. There he found that Blanche was still free and unfettered, that Blanche did not enjoy society, that Blanche still blushed when she heard his name.

His impatience to return home now exceeded all bounds. Two years had elapsed since he left England ; there seemed little chance of any war in which his services would be useful to his country, or in which he could himself acquire fame.

He lost no time in negotiating his exchange into a regiment which was shortly to sail for his native land ; and towards the end of the third spring from the time of his departure, he once more set foot on English ground, and hastened to his father's house, with all the trepidation and anxiety experienced by any one who arrives at a home from which the last intelligence is nearly a year old.

CHAPTER XII.

Love mocks all sorrows but his own,
And damps each joy he does not yield.

Unpublished Poems.

DE MOLTON had the happiness of finding no chasm in the dear and well-known family circle. He could look round and meet the beaming, tearful, tender glance of his doting mother, the gay but kindly smile of his father, the affectionate countenances of his sisters ; and he felt that the joy of reunion almost compensates for the pain of separation, when the return is not embittered by the absence of any familiar face.

Three years, however, had worked some changes in those around him. His mother was thinner, her eyes were dimmer, her nose appeared sharper, and she was altogether a smaller person than he had left her. His father was fatter, and his head more bald. His elder sister had acquired an air which bespoke the spinster of a certain age. His youngest sister was wonderfully improved : but it was Charlotte, the fourth, in whom he perceived the greatest alteration.

The very charming young man whose conversation Lady Cumberworth had been so unwilling to interrupt, had at length made his proposals ; and Charlotte, whom her brother Frank remembered pale, and thin, and shy, and dull, was grown rosy and blooming, with a peculiarly expressive countenance, and singularly speaking eyes.

The moment De Molton could draw his mother aside, he questioned her concerning Lady Blanche ; and from her he learned that the Falkinghams were still in London, that Lady Blanche was still unmarried, and that she was supposed to have lately refused a most excellent and worthy man.

De Molton's heart throbbed with joy which he did not attempt to conceal from his mother; but the very hope, to which, in her tenderness, she had not been able to resist ministering, alarmed her, now she witnessed its excess, and she began to remind her son how impossible it was that he should ever marry Lady Blanche, how improbable that the Falkinghams should ever consent to such an union, and, even should they not oppose it as strenuously as she anticipated, how impossible it was, that he should by any means muster an income sufficient to provide against real, actual poverty.

But Lady Cumberworth's prudential reasonings came too late. Her son had made up his mind that honour and gratitude now demanded the same line of conduct as that prompted by inclination, and he resolved if, upon the first interview which he could obtain with Lady Blanche, he had reason to believe he still held the same place in her affections, that he would brave all the frowns of fortune, and gladly, gaily, gallantly encounter any degree of poverty, provided she were willing to share it with him: if she were not willing to do so, she could but refuse him.

In vain did Lady Cumberworth use every argument she might have recollected before she imprudently revived the hopes he had been attempting to crush. De Molton, when once he had taken a resolution, was immovable; and his mother, although frightened at what she had assisted to bring about, could not help loving him the better for his ardour, and her heart went with him, while she dreaded the reproaches of others for having fomented what she ought to have repressed.

De Molton left a card at Lord Falkingham's the day after his arrival. On returning from the morning drive, Blanche found it upon the table, and she could not entirely check a faint exclamation. Her mother looked at her with a stern and reproachful, but melancholy glance, which suddenly drove back the colour already mounting to her cheeks. She felt ready to faint; but she was ashamed to show such emotion before one whose feelings were so little in unison with her own, and by a strong effort she mastered herself. She would have given the world had Lady Falkingham spoken, even to reproach her. This chilling silence was more awful, more subduing, than any words which could be uttered.

She gladly seized the first excuse to retire to her own room,

and there to enjoy the delight of finding that her lover was in England, safe, and faithful ; — for she felt convinced he was faithful. She had seen Lady Cumberworth only two days before. He was not then arrived. His calling the very day after his return, before he had any printed cards (for his name was only written, and, as she thought, written with an unsteady hand), spoke volumes to her hopeful heart.

They dined out on that day ; and, after their dinner, were to proceed to a party at which Blanche thought it possible she might meet the Cumberworths, and, consequently, De Molton.

If Lady Blanche's reputation for good manners had depended upon her conduct on that memorable day, she would certainly have been reckoned the least well-bred young lady who ever sat at "good men's feasts." Three times did the master of the house ask her to drink wine before she took any notice whatever of his request, and then she answered, "Mutton, if you please." The servants were repeatedly obliged to touch her sleeve with the silver dishes containing the *entrées*, before they could induce her to turn round ; and her next neighbour gave up the point of leading her into anything like connected conversation ; not, however, till he had made many fruitless attempts to do so ; for there was an animation in her countenance, there was a fire in her eye, and a blushing consciousness pervading her whole demeanour, which convinced him it was not because she was either dull, or shy, or stupid, that it was impossible to excite or to interest her.

It was with infinite vexation that Lady Falkingham remarked all these symptoms. Not a word was spoken during their drive from the dinner to the party. She knew Blanche's frank nature, and she knew, if once the ice was broken, she would speak boldly and strongly all that Lady Falkingham least wished to hear.

When they entered the assembly, the room was not full, and Blanche at once saw that none of the Cumberworth family were there. Though she ardently desired to see De Molton, yet she almost dreaded it. So many eyes would be upon her, that she would willingly have postponed the long-wished-for moment of meeting.

The rooms began to fill. She fancied a likeness in the hair of this man, in the forehead of another : but no ; when the crowd allowed her to see the rest of the face, it was not De Molton.

At length the door opened wide, and she heard announced in a loud voice, "Lady Cumberworth, the Miss De Moltons, and Captain De Molton."

Every thing swam before her eyes : she could scarcely distinguish Lady Cumberworth's delicate and fragile, though faded beauty, as she entered the apartment followed by three fine handsome girls, all taller and larger than their mother. Behind them all, she at length perceived the stately figure of De Molton ; his face bronzed, — yes, and oldened too, — but there was the same look of feeling and of dignity, although he seemed to wish to glide unperceived into the room till his eager and inquiring glance had ascertained whether his long-loved Lady Blanche was present.

Their eyes met, and as insatntly fell ; but that one glance revealed to each that, although so long separated, time had worked no change in their feelings. In one second he was by her side — the crowd had again closed in — Lady Blanche was seated while most of those around were standing, and their meeting was more private than in many a less crowded apartment.

But Lady Falkingham was by her daughter's side ; both felt her cold and searching eyes upon them, and both were unable to utter. Lady Falkingham, after a somewhat lofty recognition of De Molton, made nor sign nor movement which could encourage him to seat himself ; and he stood before them, growing every moment more and more shy, and feeling himself more inconveniently tall than ever he did before.

Blanche, in a trembling voice, had asked him when he landed, and inquired whether his voyage had been prosperous, to which questions he had made some indistinct answers ; when Lady Falkingham's attention being for a moment withdrawn by some one on the other side, he asked in a low voice whether he should find Lady Blanche at home the next morning ? She answered " she hoped so."

" I must see you," he added ; " but not here — not thus !" Lady Falkingham turned round, and he hurried away, leaving Blanche in a confused state of perfect happiness.

He mingled among the crowd, and was soon overpowered with greetings from numerous old acquaintances, and friendly congratulations upon his safe return ; but Lady Blanche was

aware that his eye still turned towards her, and that she was still in his thoughts.

She was romantic ; her heart was formed for love ; while, for nearly three years, her taste for the romantic, and the warmth of her attachment, had been nearly deprived of aliment. Since her last definitive conversation with Lord Glenrith, she had had no delicate distresses, no interesting persecutions, no occurrences of any kind. This very blank had, to a person of her disposition, been a greater trial than any more active trial would have been. Perhaps it was one which her constancy might not have stood, if her rejection of Lord Glenrith had not caused her pride, as well as her feelings, to be engaged in preserving an undeviating fidelity to her absent lover. Be that as it may, the pleasure of again knowing herself beloved, of again meeting eyes which beamed softly upon hers, of being once more engaged in all the pleasing agitations of a love-affair, was inexpressibly delightful.

De Molton, on his part, returned home intoxicated with the rapturous conviction that the beautiful, the admired Lady Blanche had for his sake rejected many of the best matches in England ; that among all the temptations of the London world, and in spite of all the opposition of her parents, she had enshrined his image in her heart of hearts. The result was, that they were both desperately in love ; and they both wondered how they had endured existence during their long and hopeless separation.

The next morning, De Molton called at an unusually early hour ; but Lady Falkingham, as a measure of precaution, had ordered the servants to say—‘not at home,’ and he was refused admittance. He bit his lips, and retired from the door with a flushed brow, but a more lofty bearing even than usual. He returned home to indite a long and passionate epistle to Lady Blanche, as passionate as might be expected from a man who had loved long, fervently and hopelessly ; who felt himself presumptuous in offering himself, yet was conscious that his effusions would not meet a cold and disdainful eye, but that they were addressed to one who fully returned his affection.

At the same time he wrote to Lord Falkingham, giving a true and undisguised account of his present situation and of his future prospects ; both of which were, it must be con-

fessed, as unpromising as can well be imagined. Yet, while he honestly detailed his own unworthiness to match with such a person as Lady Blanche, there was a proud humility pervading every line he wrote, which proved that, although on the score of fortune he owned himself her inferior, he felt conscious of being an honourable and high-minded man, her equal in birth and situation, and one who would not brook being treated with any want of consideration or respect.

Blanche received his letter with unalloyed delight. She read over and over again the glowing expressions of devotion it contained, and resolved that nothing short of the positive commands of both parents should prevent her returning such an answer as might reward De Molton for all he had suffered on her account.

With his letter in her hand, she hastened to her father's study, in order to open the subject to him before her mother had had an opportunity of influencing him against her wishes.

"Papa," she said, "I have had a letter!"

"So have I, my dear!" answered Lord Falkingham, who was sitting in his leathern arm-chair, one foot on the fender, the other on a bar of the grate, with one hand holding the open letter, with the other stroking his eyebrows, as he often did when thinking deeply and unpleasantly.

"Papa, mine is from Captain De Molton," and she coloured a little,—but it was only a little; for she was resolved, and not trembling. She knew her father was aware of her attachment; and she did not experience the confusion attendant on the first confession of a budding preference.

"So is mine," rejoined Lord Falkingham, "and very distressing it is. Take it and read it, my dear Blanche, and you will perceive that, knowing as I do how completely you return Captain De Molton's affection, it is a communication which must exceedingly distress a father's feelings!"

Blanche's countenance fell: she seized the letter; she fancied there must be some difficulty, some objection on his part, to which he had not alluded in his letter to her, and she devoured each line with her eyes, dwelling with delight upon the expressions of devotion to herself, on the impossibility he had experienced to drive her from his mind; she admired the noble pride which pervaded the whole; she fully appreciated the candour with which he entered upon the subject of his

poverty ; and quickly glancing over the sums specified as his younger brother's fortune, the amount of his pay, &c., as topics in which she had no interest, and which were "papa's affair," she returned the letter to her father with a pleased and animated countenance. "What a beautiful letter, papa ! There is nobody the least like him ; nobody so noble, so true, so constant !" and she clasped her hands earnestly ; "and I know, papa, you value such qualities a thousand times more than riches !"

"Yes, my child, more than riches ; but they will not do instead of a competency. You have been brought up in luxury, and you are very little calculated to make a poor man's wife."

"Oh, papa ! you know that Lord Glenrith's splendour did not gratify me the least. You know how indifferent I was to the diamonds ; that I never felt the least wish for his wife's beautiful *trousseau*, which all the world was admiring ; nor for the long-tailed roan horses ; nor for anything of the sort. I could be happy without those things ; but, papa, I could not — no, I could not live with a husband I did not love : " she spoke with strong emotion : "and I never shall love any one except Captain De Molton. So, if you forbid me to think of him, you may rest assured I shall never marry as long as I live. I have proved this is not a girlish fancy. It may be a first love ; but it is not the contemptible first love of every young lady which you and mamma despise so much."

"Would to Heaven it were !" exclaimed Lord Falkingham. "Blanche, you make me very unhappy, for I see nothing before you but a choice of evils ; no happiness, or much unhappiness."

"No, papa ! not unhappiness. People cannot be unhappy when they are truly attached, and when they are together. And indeed ours is a true attachment. It has stood the test of time and of absence. It has conquered all difficulties. If it was the passing fancy people can be laughed out of, I should have been cured long ago. If I could not forget Captain De Molton when I was uncertain whether he remembered me or not, shall I forget him now, when I find that, among strangers, in foreign lands, in another hemisphere, he has thought of me, and me only ; when, added to my admiration of his character, I must feel gratitude for his constancy ?"

"This is very perplexing," rejoined Lord Falkingham ; " I wish the fellow was not so very poor. He is an honest, straightforward gentleman, though : he has no humbug about him : he does not try to make the best of himself."

Blanche smiled through her tears, and looked up at her father with such a proud exulting tenderness at hearing him speak in these terms of De Molton, that his heart was touched, and, kissing her forehead, he said, " Well, my child, I will do my best. If he can get his father to assist him, and if we can make up anything like an income ——"

" Remember, I despise riches, dear papa ; I hate the very name of money."

" Yes, my love, yes ; and so do a great many other people, who want the things which cannot be got without money, as much as their neighbours do. Well ! I will see De Molton ; I will talk to him."

At this moment Lady Falkingham entered. Blanche felt a little alarmed at having first flown to her father in the tumult of her joy ; but still she was glad her father was not to receive his first impressions upon the subject from her mother. Lady Falkingham looked surprised at finding father and daughter together, with evident traces of agitation visible on both their countenances. Lord Falkingham began :—

" My dear, I have just received this letter, and I have been talking to Blanche very seriously upon the subject."

Lady Blanche was grateful to her father for so wording his sentence that it might almost seem as if he had sent for her ; for she now felt that Lady Falkingham might be hurt, and perhaps with some reason, at her first impulse having brought her to her father, rather than to her mother, upon such an occasion. Lord Falkingham dwelt upon the serious manner in which he had spoken to his daughter ; for he knew his wife would disapprove of his having allowed her to hope there was any chance of his ultimate approbation.

Lady Falkingham took the letter, and after having perused its contents with an unmoved countenance, she returned it, merely saying,—

" I think Captain De Molton is as presumptuous a young man as I ever heard of. He cannot surely expect that Lady Blanche De Vaux is to follow him in the baggage-waggon."

The colour forsook Blanche's cheek, but the next moment

it rushed again to her face, and her eyes flashed at hearing De Molton thus spoken of. The few words her father had said in approbation of his conduct had justified and sanctioned to her own mind her resolution to abide by him through all opposition. Her father thought him noble in soul, and worthy in character; he found no objection to him but the want of contemptible worldly advantages; and she felt it was both generous and consistent to persevere in her devotion.

Lord Falkingham, having once said he admired the manly candour of De Molton's letter, was not disposed to agree with his wife; and the severity of her remark made him adopt the side of the lovers more decidedly than he might otherwise have done. "Nay, my dear," he answered, "there is nothing presumptuous in the manner in which he offers himself. He speaks most humbly of his own situation."

"It is the pride that apes humility. The very fact of proposing, is presumption in itself."

"It might be, if he did not know that Blanche was in love with him; but as he cannot doubt that fact, I must say I think the young man has acted very properly in offering himself. We should think him cold and calculating if he did otherwise."

"Certainly, if a girl throws herself at a man's head, proclaiming her attachment to the sound of the trumpet, and making her *belle passion* the talk of the town, it alters the case. I once thought it impossible a daughter of mine should ever so degrade herself. But Blanche has long been beyond my control."

Blanche was so indignant for De Molton, that, although deeply hurt at what her mother said, she was not softened, and did not weep, as she would otherwise have done. She had always fancied that if Lady Falkingham had known more of De Molton, she would have perceived his superiority to the rest of mankind; that, like Lady Westhope, she would have admitted that he was formed to captivate the heart of woman, even while she condemned the marriage as imprudent: but now that her mother had read this touching and manly effusion, this epistle breathing the very soul of honour and of loyalty to the lady of his love, she was indeed astonished, disappointed, and mortified, at finding her still unmoved; and for a time her heart shut itself up from one parent, while it opened to the other.

"I think the best thing I can do," resumed Lord Falkingham, "is to have some conversation with Lord Cumberworth, and see whether it is possible to arrange anything."

"It is utterly impossible Lord Cumberworth can ever make Captain De Molton a fit match for Blanche."

"But the girl says she can never marry anybody she does not love, and that she can never love anybody except Captain De Molton."

"She has never tried," rejoined Lady Falkingham: "from the moment she so foolishly rejected Lord Glenrith she has wilfully fostered her silly predilection for this interesting penniless captain, though she has seen how miserable her infatuation has made me. If she had not nurtured it by every means in her power, it would have died away like other young ladies' first loves."

There was a contemptuous expression thrown into these last words, which roused all the heroine in Blanche.

"Mamma," she said, "I am very sorry I have made you unhappy; I am very sorry to have given my father any uneasiness; but it is not in my power to command my feelings. I can tell Captain De Molton that I will never marry him without your consent; but I can never cease to love him, nor can I ever love another. How can you say I have not tried to please you, and to obey you! Did I not accept Lord Glenrith, and have I ever ceased to repent having done so? If you command it, I will now refuse Captain De Molton; but when I do so, I cannot attempt to conceal from him that my affections are wholly his, that they have been his during three years of absence, and that they will be his as long as I live."

"You see, my dear, that you will not manage Blanche in this way. The truth is, the girl is desperately in love, and we must try to make the best of it."

Blanche was glad that her father at length treated her attachment with some respect, but she would greatly have preferred the phrase 'irrevocably attached,' to 'desperately in love.'

"Indeed, Lord Falkingham, if you encourage your daughter in these highflown notions, there is no use in my interfering, and I must make up my mind to seeing her a beggar, and an unhappy beggar; for Blanche is not formed to struggle with poverty; she has been accustomed to every indulgence;

every wish, every fancy has hitherto been gratified. No young lady thinks it more indispensable to be perfectly well dressed, no one is more alive to any want of refinement in those with whom she lives. I know my own child ; she will never be happy in the style, and among the associates to whom she wilfully dooms herself."

Lady Falkingham wept, but her tears were not all tenderness ; some anger, some mortification were mixed with the feeling which prompted them to flow.

Blanche felt all this, without knowing that she felt it, and was somewhat shocked at her own want of filial piety in not being more touched by the tears her mother shed over her.

This most unpleasant family colloquy ended by Lord Falkingham's writing to Lord Cumberworth to request an interview, and by the mother and daughter returning to the drawing-room, with less cordiality between them than is usual in modern days, when mothers are oftener over indulgent, than over severe.

CHAPTER XIII.

Je demeurai étourdie, muette, et confuse ; ce qui étiat signe que j'étais charmée.
MARIVAUX.

BLANCHE'S life had not of late been a happy one, and in addition to the natural wish of being united to the object of her love, she experienced considerable anxiety to change her present mode of existence ; and having candidly avowed to her parents that she would not attempt to conceal the state of her affections from De Molton, and having received from them no prohibition to answer his letter, she retired to her own room to indite a suitable reply.

She longed to be alone, and at length to communicate freely with the person who had so long been master of her affections. She spread the paper before her, she dipped the pen in the ink ; and when she had thus prepared herself, she found herself totally at a loss what to say. She was going to write a love-letter : — how ought she to begin ? She had written, " Dear Captain De Molton : " she thought it looked very common-

place and cold ; and she did not know how to proceed. It was true they had been long and faithfully attached, but they had seen very little of each other. Not more than half a dozen words of love had ever passed between them, and those had passed three years before, so that there were no habits of intimacy ; and now it came to the point, she felt inexpressibly shy at the thoughts of confessing her love in words addressed to the object of it.

If a man is doubtful of the success of his suit, he should never propose by letter. It is very easy to write the kindest, the civilest, the prettiest, refusal in the world ; whereas a gentle and good-natured, or a timid person, finds it always difficult to utter, in plain distinct words, to a man's face, "I do not like you ; you are disagreeable to me." The hesitation produced by the difficulty of couching such sentiments in pretty language may be construed into encouragement : silence is proverbially consent ; and a woman may easily become entangled, in cases where the feeling on her part does not amount to positive dislike.

Blanche's epistle would, to the eyes of the indifferent, have appeared a very stupid, ill-written letter. It was formal at first : as it proceeded it almost too plainly expressed the warmth of her attachment ; she then professed her determination to abide by the decision of her parents. In short it was not consistent, — it was not in keeping ; but De Molton thought it perfect. He perceived ardent feelings struggling with maiden modesty and filial obedience, and he thought the eloquence displayed in it might render it worthy a place among the effusions of a Sappho or an Heloise.

The next morning Lord Cumberworth waited upon Lord Falkingham. He did not like the idea of the marriage, for he feared he should be expected to make some sacrifices for his son's happiness, and he was not a man who was fond of making sacrifices. He had, however, an unfailing and excellent excuse for never doing anything he disliked, in the number of other sons and daughters who had an equal claim upon his parental care and tenderness, — a tenderness which consisted in imperturbable good humour, and in allowing them all the run of the house.

The two fathers were slightly acquainted ; and Lord Cumberworth, seating himself with an easy air by the fire, rubbed

his hands several times up and down his shins, and at length said with a half smile and a shake of the head, "My dear Lord, this is a sad business of my son's and your daughter's; I am very sorry for it, upon my soul!"

Lord Falkingham felt that he had more reason to regret it than Lord Cumberworth, inasmuch as Blanche would have twelve thousand pounds at his death, and De Molton would only come in for the eleventh part of fifty thousand pounds at his father's death; inasmuch as Lord Falkingham was an earl, and Lord Cumberworth only a baron. He looked a little awful, and replied,

"Your Lordship cannot regret the circumstance more than I do."

"I have done my utmost to prevent it; I have told him from his boyhood that a man is never undone till he is married. Just before he sailed, I said, 'Frank, my boy, remember peril by marriage is the worst peril a man can fall into.' But, as they say, every one must buy his own experience; and when young people have taken a fancy into their heads, we cannot preach them out of it. We cannot put old heads on young shoulders, as you have found with your daughter, my Lord."

Lord Falkingham did not half like hearing Lord Cumberworth speak as if Blanche was as resolute in her predilection as her lover was in his, though it might be perfectly true that she was so.

"My daughter places herself in my hands, and has no idea of disobeying my commands." Lord Cumberworth slightly elevated his eye-brows, and the expression of his countenance did not betoken that he participated in Lord Falkingham's reliance on his daughter's submission. "But as I know her happiness is deeply concerned in this affair, I am anxious to do every thing in my power to forward hers and Captain De Molton's wishes."

Lord Cumberworth's countenance brightened: he did not exactly know how strictly Lord Falkingham's property was entailed upon his nephew, and he drew his chair nearer to Lord Falkingham, hoping that his son was going to make a better match than he had been aware of.

"That is exactly what I say; as their happiness is concerned, poor young things, parents should strain a point,

rather than see their children pine, and pine, as poor Lady Blanche has done."

This was unpleasant to Lord Falkingham's pride and his delicacy: he instinctively pushed his chair back as many inches as Lord Cumberworth had advanced his. The good-humoured, but unrefined father of De Molton was totally unsuspicious that he had at all offended, but on the contrary flattered himself he was cleverly pushing his son's interests. "After all, what do any of us wish but to see our children happy? I am sure there is nothing I would not do that was compatible with my means."

"You are aware," resumed Lord Falkingham, "that my estates are all entailed upon my nephew; but my personal property will be equally divided among my four daughters, so that I shall be able to leave to each twelve thousand pounds at my death. This sum I will give to Blanche upon her marriage; and if you will make up Captain De Molton's income equal to the interest of her fortune, I will consent to their union, although by so doing I believe I am acting the part of a weakly indulgent, rather than of a truly kind father."

Lord Cumberworth's countenance fell. He had imagined — he scarcely knew what; and although nothing could be more fair than Lord Falkingham's proposal, it fell infinitely short of what he had expected, and he found himself not only unwilling, but unable, to do what was required of him.

De Molton had hitherto lived upon his pay and an additional 100*l.* per annum from his father. Lord Cumberworth was very little prepared to make such an addition to the 100*l.* per annum, and replied evasively, "that he would do all in his power, — but that he had duties towards his other children, — that he could not exactly say, — that he would communicate with his man of business, — that his daughter Charlotte's marriage, and the expenses attendant upon it, did not render him just then very flush of money, &c. &c." In short, he took his leave, somewhat disappointed with Lord Falkingham, while the impression he left upon Lord Falkingham's mind was by no means a favourable one.

Meanwhile, Lady Cumberworth, who could not endure to witness the state of nervous excitement and agitation in which her darling Frank paced the floor of her boudoir, resolved she would herself seek Lady Falkingham. She felt sure she could

so work upon her womanly and maternal feelings as to win her over to the side of the lovers. She accordingly ordered her carriage, and soon after Lord Cumberworth's return from his momentous interview with Lord Falkingham, she found herself at the same door.

She did not inquire if Lady Falkingham was at home, but sending in her card, she desired the servant to take it at once to his lady, and to ask if she could see her for a few minutes.

By this means she effected her entrance ; but Lady Falkingham was exceedingly annoyed at what she deemed an unwarrantable intrusion, and was disposed to think Lady Cumberworth, who was the most humble and the meekest of her sex, a pushing, obtrusive person.

Lady Cumberworth was somewhat abashed when she entered ; for although she had worked up her courage to take this step by reminding herself that Lady Falkingham was universally allowed to be a most exemplary mother, and that therefore she must surely understand, and sympathize with the maternal feelings of another, she could not quite shake off the impression produced by Lady Falkingham's constant avoidance of herself.

Lady Falkingham was alone, and received her with the most awful perfection of good-breeding. The gentle, the kind, the unsuspecting Lady Cumberworth felt chilled ; but she thought of her son's care-worn face, and she found resolution to open the subject. " She was sure that Lady Falkingham's own tenderness for her daughter would plead her excuse for intruding upon her : that her son's peace of mind was so completely involved in the event which was then pending, that she could not withstand the temptation of seeking Lady Falkingham, and of pleading his cause. She was fully aware that her Frank was by no means worthy in point of fortune and situation to match with Lady Blanche ; but that still, in point of character and disposition, he was so perfect, so kind — so dutiful a son ! so affectionate a brother ! so excellent in all the relationships of life ! — that if personal qualities could make up for the absence of worldly advantages, he was not unworthy of any good fortune."

Lady Falkingham listened with stately politeness, and when Lady Cumberworth paused, she answered : " that she had no doubt his mother's account of his moral perfections was per-

fectly just, but she feared these qualities would not provide the conveniences of life. She regretted, as much as Lady Cumberworth herself could do, the necessity of attending to such paltry considerations; yet, as the world was now constituted, it was impossible to disregard them."

"But, dear Lady Falkingham, surely anything is better than that two young creatures should die of broken hearts!"

"If young people regulated their feelings, we should not hear of such unreasonable proceedings."

"But in youth the feelings are strong, and the reason is not matured. We have all been young; we all know ——"

"Certainly — I also have been young; and therefore I know that in youth, as well as in maturity, it is possible to take reason, rather than impulse, for our guide."

Lady Falkingham had never deviated for a moment, in principle, inclination, or practice, from the strictest line of prudence and propriety. Lady Cumberworth thought of her own early love, and of its tragic ending, and ardently wished to preserve her child, and the object of his love, from the blight which had passed over her own young days. In the warmth of her feelings she could not help saying: "You have been a fortunate woman, Lady Falkingham! If you had known what it is to give the whole treasure of your young affections to one only object, and to be deprived of that object for ever, you would pause before you doomed anything you loved to such a fate! It is hard to bear when the deprivation comes from the hand of Heaven; how much more hard if from the hand of man!"

Lady Falkingham did not reply. The deep tone of emotion with which Lady Cumberworth spoke, made her unwilling to maintain her own side of the argument; neither could she be brought to allow the expediency of Blanche's marrying Captain De Molton.

At this moment, Blanche accidentally entered the room. She started at seeing Lady Cumberworth, but approached her with a glowing, blushing countenance. Lady Cumberworth, whose feelings were excited by her previous conversation, received her with open arms, embraced her tenderly, and burst into tears. Blanche, surprised, delighted, overpowered, returned her caresses with corresponding emotion. Lady Falkingham sat by, provoked to see how everything conspired to

bring about the dreaded union, and somewhat jealous of her daughter's sudden tenderness for a stranger.

The following day a second interview took place between the fathers, in which Lord Falkingham ascertained, through a profusion of fine words, that Lord Cumberworth either could not, or would not, do anything more to assist his son in making up an income ; and Lord Falkingham thought it his duty to inform his daughter, that she must in good earnest exert herself to conquer her attachment,—that the marriage was impossible.

Lady Falkingham looked triumphant. Lady Blanche gave way to utter despair. She wept, she was in hysterics ; she would not leave her room ; she fretted herself really ill ; physicians were sent for, draughts prescribed. Even Lady Falkingham began to be alarmed, and was unremitting in her attentions. But these attentions did not relieve or soothe Blanche's perturbed spirit. Her mother had never attempted by kindness to win her from her imprudent attachment, and she had completely failed in ridiculing her out of it. The consequence was, that she had lost all influence over her mind, and much of that which she had possessed over her affections.

De Molton of course heard of Blanche's illness. He wandered about the neighbouring streets ; he inquired twenty times a day at the door ; and at length, upon hearing that Lady Blanche was considered worse, and that a new physician had been called in to a consultation, he sent a message to Lord Falkingham, to implore one moment's conversation.

Lord Falkingham was uneasy and confounded at the serious aspect of his daughter's illness, and was beginning to think anything was preferable to the present state of affairs. De Molton was admitted, and a passionate appeal on his part did not meet with an absolute refusal. The matter was again renewed ; Blanche was allowed to hope — her health rallied surprisingly, and in the course of three or four days she was able to descend to the drawing-room, and there to receive De Molton as her plighted lover, her affianced husband.

And now did they at length enjoy many delightful tête-à-têtes ; and so fully were they engaged in detailing to each other all the sorrows and fears, doubts, anxieties and sufferings of their years of separation, that they had little time to talk over, or to arrange their plans for the future. They had both been

duly warned what were their prospects. Even the tender Lady Cumberworth had told them that they must not expect to possess all the blessings of this world ; that as they would be rich in that which seemed to her the greatest of all earthly ones, mutual affection, they must make up their minds to be happy without others. Lord Cumberworth repeated, " Remember, Frank, there are twelve of you : I cannot rob my other children : " — which meant, " I do not mean to give up any of my own comforts for you." Lord Falkingham said everything that was reasonable and kind, and at the same time provided them with a plain travelling-carriage, with all that is useful and necessary in the way of plate, and with as much household linen as would be advisable for people who must change their abode as often as their regiment changed its quarters. Lady Falkingham, who had been too much terrified by Blanche's despair and her illness actively to oppose the marriage, contented herself with shaking her head mournfully, and with secretly detesting her future son-in-law : but she spared Blanche many of the home truths and useful severities, which might have been of much service had they been duly attended to, but which, under the present circumstances, might have been productive of no good effect.

Blanche and De Molton, however, acquiesced in the truth of all that was urged by their other relations and friends, and declared, with the utmost sincerity, their contempt for filthy lucre ; a contempt unconditionally expressed by Blanche, but by De Molton in more measured terms, as considering it unworthy to be put into a competition with the affections of the heart.

Immediately after their marriage, they were to repair to a very pretty villa belonging to a friend of Lord Cumberworth's ; after which they were to pay several visits ; and towards the autumn they were to join De Molton's regiment, which was quartered in one of the most lovely parts of Devonshire.

As they had no house of their own, there was no need to procure furniture. Lord Falkingham had already provided plate and linen ; Lady Falkingham of course selected the *trousseau* ; presents of all kinds flocked in from the numerous connexions of both families, — presents which, as they were known to be poor, were all intended to be useful : china ink-stands — Sèvres ornaments for chimneypieces — buhl clocks,

and beautiful dressing boxes, with cut-glass bottles, mounted in silver gilt !

Nothing could exceed the happiness of the lovers, — nothing could exceed their gratitude to their friends for their considerate kindness ; and Blanche felt how preferable were these tokens of affection, to the Glenrith diamonds, which she had received so coldly.

CHAPTER XIV.

Lordly gallants, tell me this :
 Though my safe content you weigh not,
 In your greatness what one bliss
 Have you gain'd, that I enjoy not ?
 You have honours, you have wealth, —
 I have peace, and I have health ;
 All the day I merry make,
 And at night no care I take.

GEORGE WITHER.

THE honeymoon was spent at Sir Frederick Vyneton's villa ; whose man-cook and whole establishment were devoted to the new-married couple, while the good-natured proprietor was making a tour in the Low Countries.

When Captain and Lady Blanche De Molton entered the dark-green travelling chariot which Lord Falkingham had given them, and drove from the portico of Sir Frederick Vyneton's villa, on their way to Cransley to pass a fortnight with the Westhopes, Lady Blanche exclaimed, " How strange it is that there should exist people who can sell themselves for money, or for an establishment ! Should we be happier, Frank, if we possessed the mines of Golconda, than we are now ? " She threw her beaming eyes upon him with an expression of joyous tenderness which made him indeed feel himself the happiest of men ; yet he trembled to think how little she knew the details of that poverty with which he was already acquainted, although only in the limited degree experienced by a single man, whose wants, and consequently whose privations, are merely personal.

" Dearest Blanche," he replied, " you know nothing of poverty yet. Repeat what you have just said, two years hence, and I shall indeed esteem myself the most blessed of

human beings. I hold it a matter of duty and of conscience to live within one's means whatever they may be; and if, when you really have learned what is the life of a soldier's wife, you still say you despise worldly wealth, I shall be happier—yes, still happier—than I am at this moment; for I now feel as if you had engaged yourself in a fate you are not prepared for. But I have warned you, dearest Blanche—I have not won you under false pretences!”

“We shall see,” replied Blanche, smilingly. “I think I am made for a poor man's wife; for nobody can more heartily detest everything appertaining to pomp and splendour, and that odious thing called money.”

Blanche expected a rapturous glance of gratitude from De Molton, and was surprised at hearing him sigh. The truth was, they knew little of each other's dispositions when they became irrevocably engaged. Blanche was warm, enthusiastic, inconsiderate; she followed her impulses, without looking forward beyond the present moment. De Molton was not without enthusiasm, but his was of a more thoughtful and serious cast. A high notion of honour was in him paramount to all other considerations. It enabled him to leave Paris when he found his friend was in love with Blanche,—it enabled him to quit England when he discovered that she was in love with himself,—it enabled him to stay in India while there was any military duty to be performed,—it prompted him to throw himself at her feet when he found her still free, although by so doing he scarcely hoped for anything but a contemptuous refusal on the part of her parents. It now made him resolve that his love for his beautiful wife should not lead him into any expenses which his limited income could not meet; and that, however painful he might find it to see her deprived of the luxuries to which she had been accustomed, he would never be tempted to run into debt, or to be a burthen upon his father, who was neither able nor willing to assist him.

But when he made this resolution, he did not look forward with unmixed pleasure to installing her in the temporary home which he should be able to procure for her, near M * * *. She watched the serious expression of his countenance; and she admired that expression, though she wished at this moment to dispel it;—nor was it long before she succeeded in driving away all traces of care from his countenance.

Several agreeable visits succeeded that to Cransley ; and at last, when they approached the neighbourhood of M * * *, he left her for a few days at the house of a cousin, while he preceded her to his quarters, for the purpose of preparing some comfortable habitation for her reception.

He was fortunate enough to find a very pretty cottage, with a veranda and a garden, to be let, within a mile of the town. He arranged the furniture so as to make it look as little like a lodging-house as possible ; he unpacked all the presents which had, at a considerable expense, been forwarded to M * * * ; and before Blanche joined him, he had so disposed the buhl clock, the inkstands, the paper-cutters, the letter-pressers, the Persian table-covers, and the low, luxurious, well-cushioned arm-chair which Lady Cumberworth insisted should form part of the camp equipage, as to give the room a look of home.

De Molton hastened to receive Blanche at the door, and ushered her, with more complacency and satisfaction than he had anticipated, through the narrow entrance, into the treil-laged drawing-room.

It was a lovely evening ! The flowers had not yet all faded,—the little garden was bright in the western sun. The view was enchanting !—rich varieties of luxuriant trees clothed the undulating slope to the sea-shore, and the clear blue sea, at a little distance, which from their elevated situation reflected to their eye the azure of the heavens, formed as it were a background to the wooded bank.

Blanche was enchanted. “ How lovely, how beautiful ! Oh, what are castles, halls, abbeys, parks, or palaces, to such a home as this, with the person one loves ? ”

De Molton was indeed happy—too happy for utterance. A tear gathered in his eye, which he was almost ashamed should be seen even by his wife,—and yet he could not avert his eyes from hers when she looked up so tenderly in his face. He gently drew her arm within his own, and they walked forth to enjoy in the fulness of their hearts the beauties of nature, and the delight of enjoying them together.

Thanks to the snow-white table-cloth, the handsome plate, the presents of Lord Falkingham ; the pretty dinner service, that of Lord Cumberworth ; the lovely dessert service, that of Lady Cumberworth ; the cut-glass bottles, that of the eldest

Miss De Molton ; the tea-things, that of Miss M. De Molton ; the breakfast-things, that of Miss J. De Molton ; the silver urn, that of one of Blanche's married sisters ; and the silver coffee-pot, that of another ; the first four-and-twenty hours of Blanche's life as the mistress of her own house, passed in a state of rapture and of constant exclamations at the uselessness and contemptibility of money.

She forgot that she was all this time enjoying money's worth, and that indifference to worldly advantages is not put to the test while a person possesses every luxury, every elegance, though on a small scale, — at the moment of all others, too, when married lovers wish only for the enjoyment of each other's society.

One of the soldiers, who had been trained by De Molton to act as his valet, served as footman. His horses were, of course, taken care of in the barracks ; and as he had a gig, they were able to drive every day in different directions, exploring new parts of the delightful country around. Blanche's life was a day-dream of delight — her rich hazel eyes sparkled with feeling and gaiety — her rosy lips smiled joyously whenever De Molton entered the room : to her

“ This earth was all one beautiful dream.”

Still, De Molton felt that Blanche had not steadily and dispassionately weighed the advantages and disadvantages of their present situation, and that it was not with a thorough knowledge of what she was undertaking that she had made choice of poverty with him.

Too much reliance must not be placed on those who, having never had a wish ungratified in the way of worldly conveniences, profess to despise them. If those who have already experienced privation deliberately form a poor marriage, we may conclude that they will know how to abide by the selection they have made, and we need not anticipate for them mortification and disappointment.

De Molton, from his early youth, had had many opportunities of seeing the real details of a married officer's life ; and though, for the sake of the woman he loved, he gladly encountered the difficulties which he knew awaited him, he was thoroughly aware what they were, and he regretted that she should be exposed to them. He almost trembled at her exuberant

happiness, knowing that he might not always procure for her a pretty cottage orné in the neighbourhood of his barracks, and that they should not always be quartered in so cheap a country as Devonshire.

He would rather have seen her more soberly contented ; and when she, proud as it were of being so happy, looked towards him for applause, she was half-mortified at the flatness with which her unworldly sentiments were received.

These sentiments were not so frequently expressed as the season advanced. The flowers were all gone ; the little garden was very damp ; the veranda kept out the sun, and the windows did not keep out the wind ; the roof did not always exclude the rain ; and black beetles abounded on the ground floor, and sometimes a stray one mounted to the bed-rooms. The walks were muddy, the drives were windy, the trees had lost their foliage, and the chimneys smoked.

One evening, as they left the little dining-room, and entered the small drawing-room, they were half-stifled with smoke. — “ Oh, dearest Frank ! make haste and open the window, or we shall be smothered.” But the window was a French window, and the wind set that way. There was no fastening it open so as not to run the risk of breaking it, or letting in a perfect hurricane. They agreed to open door, and window, and to return to the dining-room till the atmosphere was once more fit for respiration.

This desirable result was soon accomplished, as small rooms are soon filled with smoke, soon cleared, soon warmed, and soon cooled. Accordingly, when they re-entered their snug apartment, they might as well have established themselves under the veranda, for any benefit they derived from the fire, which was only now beginning to burn. “ This is the only objection to small rooms !” exclaimed Lady Blanche. “ If one keeps the doors shut, they become oppressively hot ; and if one opens a door or a window, they are as cold as if they had never been inhabited.”

“ It is very true indeed,” rejoined De Molton : “ shall I fetch you a shawl, dearest Blanche ?”

“ Thank you, dearest Frank, I think it would be comfortable :” and she drew her chair close to the fire, and placed her feet upon the fender, when a great puff of black smoke turned back from the chimney, as if to fly in her face. She quickly

pushed back her chair. "How stupid that Devonshire girl is! —she always will heap the grate with small coals. Surely a housemaid's business is to know how to light a fire!"

"It is, indeed; but I am afraid a raw Devonshire girl is not likely to be an accomplished housemaid." And De Molton hastened out of the room to seek his dear Blanche's shawl.

"Now, Frank, you must read to me while I work: that will be so comfortable! and I have a great deal of work to do. I shall show you what a good poor man's wife I am!" She took out of her delicate ivory work-box a small cap of tiny dimensions, which she was beginning to embroider with the most intricate patterns.

De Molton looked really pleased, and smiled upon her with the gentle sentimental smile which had always appeared so bewitching.

The room became warmer, the fire clearer; the shawl was very tenderly arranged by De Molton himself; and they sat down to pass a comfortable, domestic, and rational evening.

"What book shall I read to you?" inquired De Molton. "Some of your own youthful library, which your mother so kindly sent after us?"

"Oh no! I know all those books by heart; but you have some of your own upon that shelf. I dare say they will be quite new to me."

"I dare say they will, dearest, for they are all upon military tactics, engineering, and fortification, — Vauban, Coehorn, and Jomini, &c."

"Oh, that will never do," rejoined Blanche. "But there are some novels from the circulating library at M * * *, which I have not yet looked at. I dare say that you will find something to amuse, though it may not instruct us."

He turned over the volumes — the usual trash of a country town library — Lady Evelinas and Altendorfs, and Cecílias and Mortimers, Albertinas and Ildelheims, Eleanoras and Miraldis, by the dozen. They attempted one or two, but could not proceed beyond the first three pages.

"Dearest Frank, why would you not subscribe to a London library, as I begged you to do? You see these books are not readable."

"The expense of the carriage, dear Blanche, as well as that of the original subscription, made me very unwilling to do so.

Moreover, even the London libraries do not supply one with very good books, when one is at such a distance in the country."

"Well! we will return these horrors, and you shall see what you can procure to-morrow. By the by, do send for the mason, or the bricklayer, or whoever the man may be, who does chimneys, and let him try to prevent the smoke. Look, again! now we have had fresh coals."

"I will send about it to-morrow; but I am afraid we shall not be able to effect much good in a lodging-house."

The next day "the man who did chimneys" came, and he proposed new setting the grate, contracting the sides, and altering the flue. Blanche said, by all means, if these measures would secure the absence of smoke. De Molton inquired what would be the cost of the alteration, and found that it would be nearly a third of the house-rent for the year. He paused, dismissed the man, and explained to Blanche, that as they were to pay her father and mother a visit in the spring, and as a great part of the winter was over, and as they would probably be quartered in some different part of the world the following winter, it would not be wise to spend much money upon this chimney; and he advised their sitting in the dining-room when the wind happened to blow from the smoky quarter.

To this she assented, but it was with an effort; and she evidently did so, to prove that she was indeed the good poor man's wife she had professed to be.

Colonel Jones, the colonel of the regiment, and his wife, on their return from a short absence among their friends, waited upon Lady Blanche. As she could not, in this remote corner of the world, enjoy the best society, Blanche would much have preferred living in complete seclusion. But De Molton, who thought any slackness on their part would be a want of attention from an inferior to a superior officer, did not allow her to put off the visit of propriety.

The weather was fine, though cold; and they walked to call on Colonel and Mrs. Jones, who lived in the town, close to the barracks.

As they entered the door, their noses were assailed by the smell of roast mutton and rice pudding; and they were ushered into a dark two-windowed country-town drawing-room, with a dirty green paper, and a high dado, which had once been painted white; while remarkably smart bell-ropes rendered the dinginess of the rest more conspicuous from the contrast.

Nine rosy children and the governess were seated at dinner; Mrs. Jones officiating as carver, and the head nurse assisting the youngest to guide its food safely to its mouth. A smell of pudding and of small beer pervaded the apartment, and greatly annoyed Lady Blanche.

De Molton introduced her to the Colonel's lady, who, relinquishing the carving knife to the governess, retired from the scene of action to the sofa with Lady Blanche, and apologised for her children being so late at dinner, saying, "The colonel had taken the boys out with him to see the itinerant menagerie in the market-place, and had kept them beyond their usual dinner-hour; or else," she continued, "I always make it a point to be fit to be seen at visiting hours, for when one lives in the world, one can never tell who may drop in."

The little Joneses, who, having always lived "in the world," were not shy, and were not more awed by the De Moltons than by Mr. and Mrs. M'Vining, or Mr. and Mrs. Green, or any of the other misters and mistresses who "dropped in," proceeded with their repast somewhat noisily: they were healthy, and there were nine of them!

Blanche could hardly hear herself speak, but she was too well-bred to be fine; and she contrived to look as if she heard all Mrs. Jones said, and as if she was quite accustomed to noisy children and clattering plates.

Dinner was over; grace was said in French by the eldest girl; they rose simultaneously; and, after being kissed by their mamma, were dismissed to have their faces washed, and their brown holland pinafores taken off, preparatory to the afternoon walk.

Mrs. Jones was an excellent woman, who was devoted to her domestic duties, and she considered the whole proceeding as so completely in the common course of things, that she made no apologies; and was so far from being distressed or annoyed by the bustle, the ferment, and the clatter, that she was scarcely aware a noise had existed, or that when the door closed upon the last child a calm succeeded to the storm.

When the De Moltons took their leave, Mrs. Jones good-humouredly ran to the top of the stairs and called aloud for John, at the same time complaining how troublesome it was that neither of the bells in the drawing-room would ring. John was not forthcoming; and a dirty housemaid appeared in his

stead, hastily tying a clean apron over the very dirty one beneath: she opened the street-door, and Blanche squeezed past her into the welcome open air.

"Oh, Frank!" she exclaimed, "how can people submit to live in so wretched and vulgar a manner! Mrs. Jones is not so dreadful herself, but her *entourage*!"

"My dear Blanche, Colonel Jones is very poor: and he has nine children."

"But there is no occasion to have things about one so dirty, so untidy, so uncomfortable. We are poor, but how different!"

"Our cottage would not contain one ninth of Colonel Jones's children."

"But why have no bell? And why such bell-ropes?"

"Poor people cannot afford to furnish every temporary lodging-house with elegancies."

"But why have all the Master and Miss Joneses dine in one's drawing-room?"

"I dare say all the other rooms are pre-occupied as sleeping apartments for said Master and Miss Joneses."

"Now you are resolved to be provoking, and I could beat you for not agreeing with me."

"I am afraid, Blanche, that poverty is not a pretty thing in reality, though it sounds pretty in a book."

De Molton looked serious; he could not joke upon the subject. Blanche also looked serious, for she thought he was rather over solemn, and she firmly resolved she would not be poor after Mrs. Jones's fashion.

Blanche worked very diligently at the little cap; and when she had finished the cap, she embroidered the body of a little frock, and showed them exultingly to her husband. Still these preparations did not go far towards providing the expected scion of the house of De Molton with the necessary wardrobe, and Blanche feared she should be obliged to procure many articles ready-made in the town.

"Why should not your maid work at them, my dear?" suggested De Molton, as he found her considering, and wondering, and calculating what plan she had best pursue.

"Why, perhaps she would undertake the caps for me; but she has never been used to anything but dress-making. Mamma never expected her to do anything else."

“ You have been working so much yourself, surely you must have done a great deal.”

“ Oh yes ! — this cap and this body. Look, how beautiful they are ! ”

Blanche's distresses on this score were however soon relieved by learning from Lady Cumberworth that her good-natured sisters-in law had amused themselves by making and providing everything she could want, and that a lovely set of baby-linen would meet her at Lord Falkingham's, where she was to pass some time previous to her confinement, in order that she might be under her mother's eye.

She was not sorry when the time came for leaving the pretty smoky cottage. The March winds did not agree with the chimney, and she was not well enough to be able to roam among the dells and dingles, the shaws and the banks, in search of violets and primroses ; and she thought it would certainly be more desirable to enact the invalid, with all appliances and means to boot, in her father's luxurious mansion, than in the windy, smoky, creaking lath and plaster cottage, which looked so pretty in the beginning of September.

In London, Blanche would have been perfectly happy with her kind father, — her mother who loved her, though not with the usual melting tenderness of a mother, — with her husband, who was as handsome and interesting in appearance, and if possible more affectionate in his attentions than ever, — and with her husband's family doting upon her, — if it had not been that Lady Falkingham treated De Molton with a shade of superciliousness. She always spoke of her daughter as “ poor Blanche,” wondered to see her look so well after the terrible winter she had passed in a house scarcely weather-tight, alluded constantly to the great change that had taken place in her situation, and almost ridiculed the notion of the Miss De Moltons having presented her with such pretty worked caps and embroidered frocks for the “ poor little creature ” that was expected !

These speeches, although they contained some undeniable truths, were extremely galling to De Molton, and very unpleasant to Blanche, for his sake, as well as for her own.

Blanche found herself infinitely happier with her husband's family, where, instead of being treated as a person who was now to be looked down upon by those who were once her

compeers, she was considered the most charming of her sex ; adored by Lady Cumberworth for having loved her son so disinterestedly ; made a fuss with by the Miss de Moltons because they were good-humoured girls, by nature inclined to like rather than dislike any fine, natural, affectionate creature of their own age ; and very much admired by Lord Cumberworth, who thought she was an exceedingly fine woman, and that Frank was a very lucky fellow, for the present at least, however the marriage might turn out in the long-run.

CHAPTER XV.

There little love or canty cheer can come
Frae duddy doublets and a pantry toom.

ALLAN RAMSAY.

As De Molton expected, the quarters of his regiment were changed ; and soon after Blanche's confinement, he left her to superintend the removal of their goods and chattels, and the arrangement of them in some other temporary domicile.

Unfortunately, the regiment was sent to a small town, built principally of red brick, situated in one of the midland counties, — ugly, bare, and bleak. There were no pretty cottages with nice gardens in the neighbourhood ; not even a retired farm house, with a few rooms to be let ; for the rustic inconveniences and rural inelegancies of a rambling farmhouse are infinitely preferable to the pert vulgarity of a red house in a street.

To this last alternative De Molton was most unwillingly reduced, and all he could accomplish was the acquisition of one of the few tenements to which was affixed a bright light-green balcony, which formed a brilliant contrast to the vermillion of the walls ; at least, the untarnished freshness of the colouring gave promise of new furniture and cleanliness within.

He returned to London for his wife and child, and his delight at seeing them was somewhat alloyed by finding that, during his absence, Blanche and her father had ascertained that Turton was very little out of the way to Temple Loseley, and that, consequently, he and her mother would pass a night or two with Blanche on their way into the country.

If his heart had sunk within him at the thoughts of introducing his wife to the vulgar abode which he had been obliged to provide for her, how much more did it sink at the thoughts of exhibiting to her parents their graceful, their beautiful, their high-born daughter, as mistress of this same abode. Moreover, the house was not calculated to receive an influx of company.

Still every one ought to be proud and happy to receive their father and mother-in-law under their roof ; and he was determined to be so. He reminded himself that, though he was poor, he had never pretended to be otherwise, he never would pretend to be otherwise : there was no disgrace in poverty ; he had presented himself under no false colours ; he knew his own situation, and he would not throw a ridicule over it by seeming ashamed of it.

Blanche had pictured to herself another cottage, of the same stamp as that in Devonshire : and as the country was now in full beauty, and as there was no occasion to put the chimneys to the test, she anticipated with pleasure showing her mother how happy and how pretty an humble home might be ; how dignified De Molton could look, though employed in working in his garden ; and how little she deserved the pity that had been lavished upon her.

She was extremely vexed when her dear Frank broke to her the nature of the country, the situation of the town, the sort of house he had been compelled to hire.

“ Is there nothing else to be procured for love or money ? ”

“ For money, yes ; for love, not ! ” he replied.

“ But if something else is to be got, for Heaven’s sake make any sacrifice ! ”

“ There is one house much larger than we require, which has been fitted up with every luxury by a retired brewer, who now wishes to travel, and would gladly let it.”

“ Oh, that will be just the thing ! ”

“ My dear ! the rent is far, far beyond our means.”

“ Oh ! but for one year, dearest Frank ! ”

“ With a limited income, one year’s extravagance unavoidably entails many, many years of real distress. I will not run the risk of being unable to answer the just demands of my tradesmen. I never sent a creditor away without his money, and I never will.”

De Molton spoke with seriousness, and something approaching harshness ; for he suffered under the mortification of his wife, and the tone was meant to confirm his own determination, not to be unkind to her. She thought him stern.

“ We had much better put off papa and mamma, and say at once we cannot receive them.”

Her tone was a little pettish. De Molton’s task was no longer so difficult ; he dreaded seeing her unhappy, but the moment he perceived there was temper mixed with her sorrow, his fortitude returned, and he replied, “ By no means : such as it is, our home is ever open to our parents ; and we have only to regret that it is not in our power to make them more comfortable.”

“ I had a thousand times rather mamma did not come at all, than that she should see me in such a hole as you describe.”

Her voice was half choked with rising emotion : she had led her mother to expect something so very different ! The Devonshire cottage had grown under her glowing descriptions into a miniature terrestrial paradise.

“ Blanche, this is not kind by your parents ; you should wish to see them for their own sakes.” Certainly De Molton did not wish to see them, but he would not have pleaded guilty to such a weakness for the world.

“ I do not know how I can wish to be exposed to mamma’s taunting expressions and contemptuous looks ; ” and partly from vexation, and partly from bodily weakness, she burst into tears.

“ Blanche, this is childish ! You chose to marry a poor man, and you must abide by it.”

“ You should not be the person to speak so coldly and unkindly. You know the thing I mind most of all is, that mamma always seems to despise you ; and I had hoped to show her that, though we were poor, we did not deserve pity.” Her sobs here interrupted her words. In addition to her other mortifications, she felt injured by the husband whose dignity she was so anxious to uphold.

De Molton was quite overcome by finding it was for him her feelings were so strongly excited. “ Blanche, dearest Blanche ! ” he exclaimed, “ you do not think me ungrateful for all you have given up for my sake ! Oh no ! you cannot think that ! ” And he soothed her by every attention and kindness in his power.

The effervescence of her mortification and vexation 'had exhausted itself, and she was sorry to have wounded him ; he was also annoyed at having allowed an unkind word to escape his lips ; and they were still sufficiently lovers for their little quarrel to be almost a renewal of love : almost, — but not quite. Blanche could not forget that he had said, " You have married a poor man, and you must abide by it ; " and De Molton remembered that she had said, " She should be ashamed to be seen in such a hole " as the only home he could take her to.

These words recurred to his mind more and more frequently as they drew near the small town of Turton. He felt quite angry with the Horse-guards for having built any barracks in so frightful a country as that which they were approaching. It was all arable : but there were no enclosures, no hedges, no hill, no dale, no woods, no copses ; merely a succession of fields ; in the highest state of cultivation it is true, but that circumstance did not add to their beauty in Blanche's eyes. She would gladly have seen the wheat enlivened by some brilliant scarlet poppies, some beautiful old-fashioned blue corn-flowers, now almost exploded by the improvements in agriculture ; she would gladly have been greeted with the fragrance of a distant field of charlock.

They had a good view of Turton long before they reached it ; for it was placed in the midst of a large basin of land, divided into squares by the various crops, though by no other visible mark. From the last hill, as they looked down into the broad vale below, De Molton felt responsible for its ugliness, and tried to carry off a sensation something resembling shame, by remarking that, though such scenery was not to our English eyes picturesque, it was very like " la belle France." The day was grey and colourless : there were no gleams of sunshine, no passing shadows, which will invest any extensive view with a certain degree of beauty. The wheat was all green, the barley was green, the oats were green, the tares were green, the clover was green ; there was no variety of hue, except where, here and there, a field lay fallow, or had been newly ploughed up.

De Molton looked cheerlessly upon Blanche's spiritless face, and fairly wished the first evening in their new domicile come and gone. Blanche wished, upon her arrival, to be able to

say she found it better than she expected, but the words died away upon her lips. She walked to the window, and looked up and down the straight street. There was the lawyer's house opposite, with a brass knocker well polished ; then came the Sun Inn, all new, and red, and staring ; then a paltry shop ; and then the apothecary's door, surmounted by a gilt pestle and mortar. The road was dusty, and the cut lime-trees before the houses on the other side of the lawyer's were rather whitish-brown, than green. The street ran north, and south ; a gust of wind drove down it from the north, which gave the poor leaves a fresh coating before her eyes.

It was as cold as days sometimes are in June : she turned from the window, and proposed a fire ; they both dreaded the attempt, but it succeeded, and there was no smoke.

Blanche wished the days had not been so long, that they might sooner have let down the green venetian blinds (there were no shutters), drawn the short and scanty white curtains, and shut out the dismal prospect. She tried to place the furniture in such positions as to give the room an inhabited appearance, but she only succeeded in making it look untidy. The little dimity covered *chaise-longue* was wheeled out from the wall, and placed between the fire and the window, till they found that so sharp a draught cut across from the ill-closed sashes, that it was quickly wheeled back to its original situation. A card-table was set open, and made to enact the part of a stand for *petits objets*. Blanche collected all her baskets and boxes, in hopes of making the apartment look comfortable, but her efforts were not as yet crowned with success.

The next day she bought a square of dark red cloth, and she bound it with gold-coloured binding, and with it concealed a great portion of the card-table, and set off to better advantage the *chef-d'œuvres* of art and the *souvenirs* of sentiment. The arm-chair, the dear arm-chair, was unpacked ; and the buhl clock, it was hoped by both of them, would be a redeeming

Alas ! there was no part of the room in which the buhl clock could be safely and advantageously placed ! The little chimney-piece was infinitely too narrow ; the card-table was already filled ; and the one other table which was not in constant requisition was by far too rickety to be entrusted with so precious an article.

At length the small *souvenirs* were removed to the rickety table, and the clock was established upon the card-table ; and De Molton, when he looked upon his wife with her child upon her knee, saw no fault in the arrangement of the room.

There was, however, one misfortune to which even De Molton could not close his eyes or bar his senses, — a misfortune, too, which was utterly irremediable.

A kind of fixture, — half cupboard, half bookcase, — the lower part of which opened like a cupboard while the top finished in shelves, adorned each side of the fire place. Now, in the lower part of one of these nondescript things there was every reason to believe the predecessors of the De Moltons had been in the habit of keeping apples. When the room was closed, this dire smell of apples assailed their noses, and at length it was traced home to the guilty spot.

Chloruret of lime, eau de Cologne, every sort of fumigation was tried, but the indomitable smell was only quelled for the time : it returned with fresh vigour ! Blanche was in utter despair, for Lady Falkingham was expected in a day or two, and she was renowned for the extreme acuteness of her olfactory nerves ! Blanche had repressed any expression of her feelings, till this last blow quite overcame her fortitude.

“ Can nothing be done about this smell, Frank ? It will distract mamma ! ”

“ Upon my word I do not know what more to recommend. Let us wash it again with chloruret of lime just before your mother comes.”

“ I would not mind all the rest if we could but get rid of this smell of apples ! ”

That expression — “ all the rest,” spoke volumes. De Molton was fully aware how much it implied of discomfort.

Love in a cottage is a thing very frequently met with in books, and not unfrequently in actual life ; but love in a red-brick house in the street of a country town can never exist in poetry, and seldom in reality.

“ There is one other thing I would fain alter, Frank, and I think it might be accomplished without much expense.”

Blanche spoke timidly, for she had learned to be afraid of proposing anything which he might deem extravagant. “ Could we not get rid of the knocker on the door ? It looks dreadful ; but the horrid vulgar sound is worse than the appearance. It

is impossible to forget where one is, when one hears that rap-a-tap ! ”

De Molton sighed to think she should so wish to forget that she was in her home, with her husband and her child ; and Blanche, two years before, would not have believed she could ever have been otherwise than contented, when certain of De Molton's constancy, of his undivided affection, and when united to him by the holiest ties.

The day arrived on which the almost dreaded parental visit was to be paid. De Molton proposed driving to a nursery-garden at no great distance, and buying some flowers, which would make the room look rather more gay and countryfied. To this Blanche gladly assented ; and she took great pains to fill all the little ugly vases upon the chimney-piece, and all the finger-glasses which were not wanted after dinner, with such flowers as could be procured. They had arranged everything for the accommodation of Lord and Lady Falkingham as well as the capabilities of the house permitted. Blanche's maid was turned out of her room, and into the nursery, for Lady Falkingham's maid ; an arrangement which by no means met with her approbation, and which had not been accomplished without considerable difficulty.

De Molton relinquished his dressing-room to his father-in-law, and, unknown to any one, as he hoped, performed his toilet very early in the morning in the dining-room ; the little back-parlour having been consecrated to the ladies'-maids, and anything being more practicable than to interfere with their morning repast.

Both Blanche and De Molton had looked repeatedly into each room, and had ascertained that everything was as comfortable as they could make it, and they sat waiting in some agitation for the arrival of their guests.

Generally speaking, if there is a moment of unmixed happiness, it is that in which parents pay their first visit to a married child, and in which children receive the first visit from their parents.

The pretty, half-childish, half-matronly pride with which the young wife does the honours of her domestic arrangements ; the tearful joy of the mother as she inspects and admires ; the honest happiness of the father ; and the modest exultation of the bridegroom who has installed the creature he

loves in all the comforts with which she is surrounded, — render the moment one of pleasing interest to the most careless bystander.

But such were not the feelings which animated any of the present party.

CHAPTER XVI.

Some difference of this dangerous kind,
By which, though light, the links that bind,
The fondest hearts may soon be riven;
Some shadow in Love's summer heav'n,
Which, though a fleecy cloud at first,
May yet in awful thunders burst.

Lalla Rookh.

THE Falkinghams did not arrive till very late. Blanche knew that every moment's delay was injurious to the repast she was so anxious should be tolerably well dressed. She several times ran down into the kitchen herself, to enforce upon the cook that she must contrive to keep back the dinner without letting the meat be over-roasted.

At length they heard a great rumbling of wheels and hallooing of little boys, and the well-known carriage with four horses drove rapidly by, and drew up at the Sun Inn opposite. The postillions were soon directed to the right house; the whole equipage was turned round, and at length drew up before the little door.

All this caused a sensation; and well *crépé'd* heads were seen popping up above the white blinds of the lawyer's opposite, and frilled caps appeared at the windows of the house with the cut lime-trees, and waiters, chamber-maids, and boots thronged to the door of the inn, hoping the coroneted carriage was going to put up at the Sun.

The first greetings were over, and Blanche was eager to show her mother to her room, for, "on hospitable thoughts intent," she was reflecting on the over-boiled chickens and the over-roasted beef. But their progress was arrested by the imperial! It was stuck in the turning of the stairs; and Lady Falkingham's tall footman, who measured six feet two inches and a half, and De Molton's omnipresent John Benton,

were struggling, and lifting, and pushing, and shoving in vain !

This was an unlooked for misfortune ; one which might have been laughed at, among people so nearly and intimately connected, and one which might have been an excuse for dining very merrily in travelling costume ; but with Blanche's feelings, with Lady Falkingham's, with De Molton's feelings, the misadventure had a contrary effect. Blanche was extremely annoyed, and led her mother back to the drawing-room ; while De Molton hastened to lend his assistance, and, with the help of his more judicious mode of turning the imperial, it was extricated from its inconvenient position, and was safely deposited in Lady Falkingham's room.

All this produced some delay ; then came their respective toilets ; and they were not seated in the dining-room till an hour and three quarters after the cook had expected to " dish up."

It requires the coolness, the presence of mind, the decision of the bolder sex, to be able to accelerate or to retard the dinner-hour. The humble cook of the De Moltons was thoroughly feminine in her timidity, and the consequence was, that the chickens fell to pieces in the dish, that the beef crackled under the teeth, that the potatoes were watery and sodden, that the greengages of the pudding had burst through their surrounding paste, and presented a shapeless, confused, and uninviting mass to the eye, while the maccaroni was stringy, strong, and burned.

De Molton had wished the dinner to be plain and without pretension, and he had flattered himself that, by attempting nothing, they must be secure from a failure. Alas ! they had the mortification of seeing both their guests scarcely able to finish what they had upon their plates, and of perceiving that Lord Falkingham helped himself three times to cheese, and that Lady Falkingham demolished full half the sponge-cake at dessert ! De Molton, who was habitually reserved and possessed much self-command, maintained a calm exterior ; but Blanche, who, whatever might be her wish to do so, was never able to conceal her feelings for any length of time, was in a fussy state of agitation, and was the first to complain of the badness of the dinner.

Her remarks disturbed the equanimity of John Benton,

who was most anxious that all should go off well. In his eagerness, he made more noise, jarred the plates, knocked the glasses together, clattered the knives and forks, and placed the dishes on the table in a more fearful undecided manner than he was ever known to do before ; constantly brushing by Lady Falkingham's cap to give a finishing touch to the arrangement of the table. Blanche's martyrdom increased every moment !

It is very easy to be tranquil, composed, and agreeable at the head of one's table, if one has the comfortable assurance that all will proceed properly and decorously ; but when one has no reliance that such will be the case, it is not so easy to preserve the careless air of perfect good-breeding ; still less so, should one actually see one's guests hungry and incommoded : such tranquillity amounts to a lofty pitch of stoicism scarcely attainable by common mortals.

If the Falkinghams had smiled good-humouredly, it might have been better ; but the mother preserved a civil semblance of not perceiving what was amiss, evidently treating the present, as the best entertainment it was in the power of the De Moltons to give, and considerately sparing their feelings. When the ladies retired after dinner, Lady Falkingham made no allusion to the house, the establishment, the cookery, or any part of the *ménage*, except the baby, on whose growth she expatiated, and whom she wished to see in its crib.

Blanche accordingly took her mother up-stairs to the garret, where Lady Falkingham was shocked at finding two beds in the small room. " My dear Blanche, do you allow two people to sleep in such an apartment as this ? It is very bad for the baby to be so confined as to air and space."

" My maid sleeps here just now," Blanche replied ; " it cannot hurt the baby for a little while."

" The weather is so hot, I own I should dislike it very much ; I always was very particular about giving you all an airy nursery ; — but I suppose it cannot be helped," added Lady Falkingham, checking herself.

" Oh this house is horrid ! " exclaimed Blanche ; " if you had but come to see us in our Devonshire cottage, mamma — ! "

" I wish I had, my dear."

" But you know we have this only for a time, mamma ; and next year we may be quartered in a prettier country, and

a nicer neighbourhood, and where we can get something out of a town."

"I hope you will, my love," replied Lady Falkingham, who was resolved to dwell as little as possible upon her daughter's present discomfort, and who thought herself very kind and very meritorious in not saying what she thought, felt, and looked, — viz. "I told you how it would be."

The breakfast was not more prosperous. The bread was baker's bread: the French rolls, well rasped and very tough, were exceedingly unlike the rolls and cakes of every variety which graced the breakfast-table of Temple Loseley. The butter was bought at the shop; and Turton was situated in an arable, not a grazing country: they churned every morning at Temple Loseley. The cream was thin, colourless, and tasteless: the Alderneys at Temple Loseley were renowned for their perfection in beauty and breeding.

Most assuredly, urban and rural poverty are very different things. With a pretty garden; with flowers, poultry, cream, butter, eggs, and vegetables in profusion; vulgarity and discomfort may always be avoided, though splendour may not be attained.

The Falkinghams went away, sincerely commiserating their daughter, although Lady Falkingham's sincere sorrow was somewhat alleviated by being able to remark to her husband how precisely everything had turned out as she had foreseen and predicted.

When they had driven from the door, Blanche sat down to work at her needle, with a sensation of depression more overwhelming than she had ever felt before. "I am glad mamma is gone!" she exclaimed, after having hemmed nearly a yard of muslin without uttering: "when people are no longer young, they miss the comforts to which they have been accustomed!"

De Molton said nothing. He also had been deeply hurt, mortified in every way; hurt to see his wife exposed to mortification, and mortified to see her feel it so keenly.

"Not but what mamma behaved beautifully," continued Blanche, for she was half angry with her husband for his very silence: — she wished him to declare how annoyed and unhappy he also was; but he was a proud man, and when such a man does feel mortification, it does not find vent in words. Being somewhat displeased at his silence, she did

not spare him. The feelings of the daughter got the better of those of the wife, and she proceeded: "Mamma never complained of anything. It was only through her maid that I heard she could not sleep a wink on account of the baby crying over head; and the partition being so thin, she heard her as plainly as if she had been in the same room. Mamma was very kind, she took care to say nothing to vex me."

De Molton thought mamma would have been infinitely more kind if she had appeared a little less miserable, and had not looked at Blanche as if she thought her a victim. He did not feel in charity with Lady Falkingham; he found no pleasure in hearing her praised.

"I am going to call on Colonel Jones," said De Molton; "I shall be at home again in time to walk with you." He took his cap and his stick, and sallied forth; but he had walked far beyond Colonel Jones's, before he recollected his intention of calling upon him, and he had to retrace his steps for some quarter of a mile. He found him just returning from a long walk with some of his children, who were joyously sporting around him; and they all together mounted the narrow staircase which led to a drawing-room much in the same style as Blanche's, though somewhat larger in its dimensions.

Mrs. Jones and her eldest girl were busily engaged in needle-work, while the second daughter was reading history aloud. She cordially greeted De Molton, and said they had been taking advantage of the Colonel's having cleared the house of the boys to get on with the education of the girls; "for in a small house, and with such a family, it is difficult to find a quiet moment," added Mrs. Jones, with a cheerfulness and good-humour which seemed to prove she found nothing unpleasant or disgraceful in poverty.

She was the daughter of a country curate, and although well educated, and tolerably well born, she did not feel the want of luxuries and elegancies to which she had never been accustomed, and which none of those with whom she associated missed any more than herself.

De Molton wished he could teach his wife to accommodate herself to her circumstances, as Mrs. Jones did. But how many habits had she to unlearn and to forget before she could be happy as Mrs. Jones was happy!

He resolved to cultivate the Joneses, and he asked them to dinner that very day, frankly bidding them come and feast upon the remains of the provisions they had laid in for his father and mother in law. The happy and good-humoured Joneses accepted the invitation in the same unceremonious spirit in which it was made, and De Molton returned home to inform his wife of the company she might expect. She detested the thoughts of encountering another dinner in her own house ; but De Molton was not a person who would ever condescend to ask his wife's permission before he invited a friend to dinner, and of that she was fully aware.

The Joneses arrived just five minutes before the appointed hour ; and Mrs. Jones asked Blanche's leave to take off her bonnet, and arrange her hair at her looking-glass, as she had walked from her own house. She shortly re-appeared with her bows and her ringlets in the most perfect order, for she had never been in the habit of depending upon the services of a maid. She also appeared in a smart silk gown ; her fair, fat, handsome arms uncovered, a necklace on her neck, and ear-rings in her ears.

Blanche, on the contrary, was in a more seemly costume for a country dinner by day-light ; and Mrs. Jones wondered her hostess should wear in the evening what seemed to her a morning dress.

The cook's nerves had not been agitated, and the dinner was very good. Colonel Jones was gay and conversible : he had served in the Peninsula ; he, and his wife also, had been at Paris when the allied armies entered it ; they had seen many different countries, had been mixed up in many of the events of that period, when every day brought changes which affected empires ; they had been thrown with many of the personages who already figure as historical characters. They were delighted with De Molton, who was an excellent listener ; delighted with Lady Blanche, who possessed the charm to which all people in all ranks are sensible,—the real good-breeding of real high fashion ; and Blanche was astonished to find herself in better spirits than she had been in for some days.

No fund of natural spirits, however inexhaustible it may be, can stand the trial of seeing the guests under your roof, cold, abstracted, and comfortless ; whereas the phrenologists

could certainly point out some organ in the human head which takes pleasure in being developed when you feel that those towards whom you are exercising the rites of hospitality are really and thoroughly enjoying themselves.

There was a good deal of broad humour about Colonel Jones, and no shyness ; he was animated in his descriptions. De Molton's wine was good of its sort ; and the dinner was gay, — noisily gay. Blanche thought them a little vulgar, but still she liked them both ; and after the cheerless restraint which had prevailed during the two preceding days between the nearest and dearest relations, there was something which expanded the heart in the warmth and cordiality of the Joneses.

The dinner which they gave the De Moltons in return proved less agreeable. The astonishing clatter made by the servants, the badness of the cookery, the multitude of children, and the friends who were invited to make up the party, did not conduce to reconcile Blanche to the real work-day details of poverty, as De Molton had at first intended it should, by showing her how happy people could be in its despite.

The summer wore away, but without any summer enjoyments ; the autumn succeeded, and winter followed in due succession. They had many invitations from different friends, but travelling was expensive ; and having been in London for some months during the spring, they could not obtain leave of absence for any length of time which might make it answer to leave home.

The following year saw them removed to a fresh habitation, and saw another olive-branch added to the parent stock.

The nurse now professed her inability to attend to two children, "both babies as it were ; she could not do justice to the dear little loves. Miss Emma, she was just old enough to get into mischief ; and she was more work, a body might say, than the infant himself." There was no denying the reason and truth of the nurse's statement. It was also true, as the nurse added, "that my lady was very particular, and liked to see the children always nice ; that it was not as if she did not mind their being just dressed in brown holland pinafores, and such like, as the little Master Joneses were ; that, for her part, she could not a-bear to see children look so, — just like anybody's children."

De Molton, as well as Blanche, was proud of little Emma's exquisite beauty, and they could neither of them endure the thoughts of their children not being thoroughly well taken care of. "Could you not ask Mrs. Green to help nurse?" suggested De Molton; "she might walk out with Emma, and might make her clothes. Our life is such a quiet one, surely she must have a great deal of time upon her hands."

Blanche stood rather in awe of Mrs. Green, who was a regular fine lady, and who felt the change in her situation to the full as acutely as Blanche herself could do, and who had not the same strong motive for bearing it with uncomplaining fortitude, inasmuch as she was not married to the man of her choice, neither had she any character for consistency to maintain. In many of the minor distresses and difficulties which had occurred, Mrs. Green had not failed to make her mistress feel how great was her merit in submitting to them; and Blanche knew it was utterly impossible to accomplish what De Molton (who was not so well versed in the nice limits and boundaries of the honourable office of lady's maid) thought could be so easily arranged.

"It is quite impossible, my dear Frank! Green has already put up with a great deal to oblige me, and I could not ask her to wait upon the nursery."

"I do not want her to wait upon the nursery, but she might assist the nurse."

"I can part with her, Frank; but I cannot propose to her to attend upon the children."

De Molton, who saw no reason why one woman should sit idle, while another had more to do than she could well perform, was half annoyed with Blanche, and he answered rather quickly, "All I can say is, I cannot afford to keep another servant."

"I will tell Green what you say," replied Blanche, with the tone of a heroine and a martyr; and accordingly she lost no time in informing Green that she must look out for another situation unless she would wait on Miss Emma, as Captain De Molton wished; and as, of course, Mrs. Green declined to do.

So much separated from all former connexions, friends, and relations, as Blanche had been of late, she naturally felt a good deal annoyed at parting with a person whom habit

had rendered agreeable to her, who was an excellent lady's maid, and was pleasing in her manners. De Molton could not sympathise in her annoyance at getting rid of a fine lady, and infinitely preferred the stout good-humoured girl who came in her stead, and who was too happy to fetch and carry, and was too much honoured by being allowed to wait on my lady.

Unfortunately, the last remnant of Blanche's trousseau was growing very shabby, and her wardrobe needed recruiting. Green was gone; the girl Phœbe was no milliner; Blanche could embroider beautifully, and she could now accomplish children's frocks with considerable success, but she could not make her own clothes. How should she? She was obliged therefore to have her wants supplied by the country milliners, and both she and De Molton were appalled at the bills which were the inevitable consequence.

Blanche wished exceedingly not to be expensive, but she knew not how to avoid being so. She had never had any allowance when a girl: she had been so amply supplied with every article of dress upon her marriage, and had since led so retired a life, that little occasion to spend money had occurred until now; and she was ignorant how miraculously, when once the purse-strings are opened, the contents vanish as it were of themselves.

It is a great fault in the education of girls, to omit teaching them, in some measure, the value of money. They suddenly find themselves at the head of an establishment, in which, if large, considerable sums pass through their hands; if small, on them depends the comfort, or discomfort of the *ménage*; and they are not aware, (except from theory, which has little to say to practice) that twenty shillings make a pound.

The loss of Green was an annoyance of daily recurrence. Blanche could not dress her own hair; and the awkward attempts of the shy and frightened red-fisted maid to brush and to curl, to braid and to *crêper*, made her every morning come down to breakfast in a ruffled and uncomfortable state. She found it necessary now and then to buy herself a cap, and unluckily the bill for these caps came in at a time when De Molton's finances were at a very low ebb. Blanche had no pin-money, and she applied to him for the requisite sum.

"What nonsense, Blanche, to buy tawdry caps, when you

have all that beautiful brown hair, which is so much prettier and more becoming than any cap that can be made."

"I never learned to dress hair; and since Green is gone, I find it impossible to do without a cap. I have not quite made up my mind to go about a perfect figure, yet; but I dare say I soon shall. It is impossible to be well-dressed without a maid."

"But surely you could soon learn to arrange your hair. You told me Mrs. Jones always dressed her own, and I am sure it is very smart—in bows, and all kinds of things."

This was too much for Blanche to endure. To have been forced to part with her maid! To be refused a cap! To be twitted with Mrs. Jones! To have Mrs. Jones set up as a pattern! "Indeed I should be very sorry to look like Mrs. Jones!" she exclaimed, with a heightened colour, and an eye which was very beautiful in its increased brilliancy: "if you wished to have a wife who should look and dress like Mrs. Jones, you should not have selected me! I hope I may never arrive at such a pitch of vulgarity as that! I had rather look like anybody in the whole world than Mrs. Jones!" and in her anger and petulance, she spoke, as she would not have done in a cooler moment, of a person whom she both respected and liked.

"Mrs. Jones is a most excellent and exemplary woman," replied De Molton, with some solemnity of manner; "one who performs the duties of her situation in life cheerfully and admirably. I have a very great regard for Mrs. Jones. Where is this bill?" he added, with an awful calmness: "I am sorry to say you must buy no more caps. I have not the means of paying for them!" He gave her the money, which she took with pain and indignation.

It is very disagreeable to ask for money,—very disagreeable to receive it when it is given grudgingly. Women should have, settled upon them when they marry, the sum which, in proportion to the income of their husband, they may in fairness spend upon their dress; otherwise, if extravagant, there are no regular limits to their extravagance: while, on the other hand, however economical they may be, and however liberal the husband may wish to be, they may chance to ask for money at a moment when it may prove inconvenient to pro-

duce a sum which the man had not calculated would be called for at that particular moment.

An expression of annoyance will wound and distress a high-minded woman, will anger a high-spirited one, or will induce a timid one to conceal her bills, and to acquire the habit of contracting debts unknown to her husband.

Blanche received the money with a swelling indignant heart, and her feelings were not soothed when a tradesman entered with a long bill, for which De Molton drew a draft without a remark or a murmur, and most politely dismissed the man, pleased with his exactness and punctuality.

Blanche thought, "After all, he is not really so poor as he pretends to be. He only talks thus to prevent my spending anything. He has money enough for every one else."

De Molton had appointed that very morning to pay that very bill. He had purposely reserved the requisite sum, and he remained with scarcely enough for the weekly unavoidable expenses. But he did not explain all this to his wife. He was resolved never to run into debt, and he was unapproachably serious and correct upon the subject. If he had candidly explained the state of the case to her, shown it her in black and white, perhaps she would have joined with him in cheerfully accommodating herself to existing circumstances; but he dealt in general expressions of poverty and distress, and yet, at the very moment he complained most bitterly, the money was forthcoming for those things which must be paid for. It was exactly *because* he would have wherewithal to meet necessary expenses, that he so strenuously opposed any which he deemed unnecessary.

Having once come to the conclusion that he had acquired a habit of complaining, and that he could find money if he chose to do so, she only felt injured when he enforced economy, and mentally accused him of making needless difficulties.

Two more years elapsed, and their family consisted of four promising children, when De Molton's regiment was ordered to Brighton: they were again thrown among people of their own class, and friends of former days.

They had been married nearly five years, and during those years words had been spoken which could not be forgotten. Poverty had come in at the door, and if Love had not quite flown out at the window, he fluttered on the window-sill.

CHAPTER XVII.

And ruder words will soon rush in
 To spread the breach that words begin,
 And eyes forget the gentle ray
 They wore in courtship's smiling day,
 And voices lose the tone that shed
 A tenderness round all they said ;
 Till, fast declining one by one,
 The sweetnesss of love are gone.

Lalla Rookh.

AMONG other old acquaintances, the Westhopes were established at Brighton ; and it was with mixed feelings that Blanche prepared herself to meet the friend of her youth, the person who had most unintentionally assisted to foster her love, by always appearing so impressed with De Molton's attractions. Upon that subject both men and women are more influenced by the estimation in which the object is held by others, than they would willingly allow : they are ashamed to be so easily pleased as to prefer a person whom no one else thinks pleasing, and they are decidedly proud of being preferred by one whom every one else admires.

Mingled with her desire to see her early friend, Blanche experienced a certain dread of the scrutinizing eye of intimacy. She felt she should never be able to echo, with the accent of truth, the romantic sentiments in which they used once to indulge ; and she did not wish her friend to discover that the love which she had spoken of as equal to endure any trials, had nearly sunk under the petty and undignified vexations of pecuniary difficulty.

Time, however, had worked some changes in Lady Westhope. She had long conquered her incipient inclination towards Mr. Wroxholme ; she had learnt that a well-regulated mind can make itself contented, if not happy, under almost all circumstances ; she had quite given up the point of being the youngest and most admired person in her circle ; and she had convinced herself that she ought to be grateful for the worldly comforts with which she was surrounded, for the ample means of doing good which were within her reach, and for the circumstance of having a very good-humoured husband, who, whatever might be his faults, was no tyrant.

Lord Westhope, also, was somewhat altered. He was now

eight years older than when we began our story, and twenty-two years older than when he began his infidelities. It was, indeed, time he should have sown his wild oats, and accordingly he was become infinitely more domestic. Although love was a feeling which could never again exist between them, there subsisted a considerable regard, and their society was far from disagreeable to each other.

On the morning after the arrival of the De Moltons, when Lady Westhope called upon Blanche, one of the disputes, which were now of too frequent occurrence, had just taken place between her and her husband. Blanche had made a desperate effort to persuade De Molton to take a house which was to be let at a rent, low in proportion to its size, but still higher than he thought he could afford. Blanche shrank from being seen by her former associates in the mean and paltry lodging which, in so expensive a place as Brighton, was the only one he found within his means. He persisted in his usual resolution, never to do anything which might eventually lead to a shabby action, for the sake of avoiding a shabby appearance. He had not long left the room, after a peremptory refusal to accede to his wife's request, when Lady Westhope entered.

After the first greetings were over, and Lady Westhope had admired Blanche's beautiful children, they drew their chairs to the fire, and Lady Westhope exclaimed, "How I envy you those lovely children, Blanche! I think, if I had four such enchanting creatures, I should be quite happy! I should so like to have a large flourishing family growing up around me!"

"Heavens! dear Lady Westhope! and I consider each addition to mine as a visitation which gives me the blue devils for months! When once they are there, and they have made themselves beloved, one would not part with them for worlds; but if you knew what unceasing trouble they give, and how difficult it is to do one's duty by them, you would not wish for a large family."

"Well! perhaps there are advantages, as well as disadvantages, in everything. I have schooled my mind, and brought myself to think everything is for the best. I am a much more contented person, Blanche, than when we used to talk over your love affairs in former days. Now, tell me a little about Captain De Molton. Is he as handsome as ever?"

and are you as much in love as ever? I certainly never did see such a regular love-match as yours! The longer you were separated, and the more you were thwarted, the more desperately constant you both were!"

"Opposition has always been supposed to have that effect: I believe it has often turned many a passing fancy into a *grande passion*."

"Why, you are not implying such treason against yourself as to say that opposition assisted to foster your *grande passion*?"

"Oh dear, no! I only spoke generally. But do you tell me a little about Lord Westhope," she added, to turn the conversation from her own affairs.

"Oh! he is grown so kind and attentive! I assure you we are settling down into a most domestic comfortable old couple."

The entrance of Mr. Stapleford interrupted the mutual investigation of conjugal felicity which the friends had set on foot. Mr. Stapleford said he had just met De Molton in the street, who had told him where he should find Lady Blanche, and he had lost no time in paying his respects to her. "But, dear Lady Blanche, you are going to remove from this horrid place? In such a situation too! A mile and a half from the sea. I could scarcely believe De Molton, when he pointed out this as your abode; and should have imagined he was playing off a practical joke upon me, if I had not known he was not given to being facetious. But I suppose you are only here till you can procure something in the land of the living."

Blanche did not wish Mr. Stapleford to perceive she was not perfectly contented with her fate, and she replied that she did not like being within hearing of the sea, — the constant monotonous breaking of the waves upon the shore made her melancholy.

"There is no accounting for tastes," he replied, with a polite bow, and a glance which quickly ran over the shabby furniture, the once smart trellised paper, (a sort of paper peculiarly in vogue at sea-bathing places, where real flowers and real green leaves are rare,) the little round convex mirror surmounted by an eagle with a chain in its bill, and the other lodging-house elegancies which adorned the room, especially

the bell-ropes, which were as fine, and much more dirty, than those at Mrs. Jones's, which, four years before, had excited such strong feelings of horror in Blanche's mind. She saw the excursive glance of his eye, and she saw the affectation of politeness with which he then let it fall on the ground, while a slight smile just played about the corners of his mouth. She always disliked him ; and she now most devoutly wished he had not fancied the sea-air bracing, and the society of Brighton agreeable.

"You will be at Mrs. L.'s this evening, shall you not?" inquired Stapleford.

"No!" replied Lady Blanche ; "I am not acquainted with her."

"Ah! by the bye, she has come into fashion since your time. How long is it since we lost sight of you?"

"I have been married five years."

"Married! Ah! marriage is a holy rite, synonymous with honourable sepulture. You have, from that day, been dead to all your friends! By the bye, I was with the Wentnors a month ago. You know your old friend Glenrith is become Lord Wentnor now. He, however, seems determined not to be buried alive. He is giving balls and fêtes of all descriptions ; or rather *she* is, for he is such a doting husband, that every fancy of hers is a law to him. It is quite pretty to see such love-making after eight years of marriage, especially as the result of this Arcadian conjugality generally is a splendid entertainment by which half England profits."

Stapleford's instinct for saying the disagreeable thing had not deserted him ; and he left Blanche to ponder on the fate ~~she~~ had rejected, and to compare it with that she had persisted in choosing. Lady Westhope, too, was happy! She rejoiced that such should be the case ; but certainly the reflections she made during the rest of that day were not unworldly ones.

De Molton had again met Stapleford in his morning walk, who, after complimenting him upon the unimpaired beauty of his wife, attacked him most unmercifully for having kept her so long in seclusion, and for now burying her in such an out-of-the-way place, and implied (what he had no right to know, but what he had guessed from the expressive countenance of Blanche, in which her feelings might always be read as in a

mirror,) that she was an unwilling denizen in that remote suburb.

De Molton returned home somewhat displeased at having been, as he imagined, spoken of as a tyrant and a miser. The tête-à-tête in the evening did not promise to be agreeable.

"Mr. Stapleford called this morning," Blanche began.

"So he told me," replied De Molton.

"And Lady Westhope has been here."

"Did they tell you any news?"

"Mr. Stapleford told me he had been staying at Wentnor Castle; and he gives such a description of their happiness! They seem to be giving splendid fêtes and beautiful entertainments, all to please her; for, he says, that every wish of Lady Wentnor's is a law to her husband."

De Molton felt this last sentence as an implied cut at him. "It is very fortunate for Glenrith that he has money to throw away in gratifying every foolish whim of a fantastical woman."

Blanche felt that this was a hit at her; and forgetting that by applying to herself what her husband said, she gave him a right to conclude she meant to be personal in her account of Lord Wentnor as a husband, she followed her impulse, and replied:—

"I cannot see that there is anything fantastical in wishing not to be laughed at by all one's acquaintance, and in disliking a house one's friends can hardly bring themselves to enter."

"Blanche, when you married me, you knew you married a poor man: if you wished for riches and splendour, why did you not marry Glenrith?"

"I am sure, if I wished for kindness and for good-humour I had better have married Lord Glenrith. I do not know what foolish, girlish infatuation came over me."

"It is, indeed, unfortunate, that in consequence of this foolish, girlish infatuation, which are the terms by which you designate your attachment to your husband, you should have thrown away a situation in which you would have been so much happier. I have but to regret that I should have marred your fortunes—so unwittingly marred them,—for neither Glenrith nor yourself can accuse me of having, by any arts or underhand practices, attempted to win your affections from him."

This implied, according to Blanche's interpretation of his

words, that she had allowed them to be gained before he had made any attempt to do so ; and, as angry people usually do, answering to the sense she chose to attribute to his speech, rather than to its plain and obvious meaning, she replied, —

“ If it was only pity for the unfortunate passion which you supposed me to entertain for you, which induced you to profess love at Cransley, it is indeed unfortunate that you allowed your pity so far to overcome your prudence. If I had imagined such to have been the case, I should most assuredly never have broken off my engagement with Lord Wentnor.”

“ I can only again lament that I should have been the cause of your doing what you so much regret.”

“ If this is my reward for having rejected, for your sake, the best *parti* in England, a good man, too, and one who loved me ; for having disappointed and angered my parents ; for having preserved an undeviating constancy for three years to a person who now laments that I did not marry his rival, and confesses he only married me out of pity, I am indeed the most unfortunate woman in the world !” She burst into a flood of tears of anger and vexation.

“ Blanche, you wilfully pervert the meaning of all I say. When did I imply that I married you for anything but love ? But these reproaches, this petulance, are not the right method to preserve a husband’s affection.”

“ If nothing but a slave, — a patient, meek Griselda, — a Mrs. Jones, — can preserve your affection, I am afraid I have no chance of preserving it ! I do not know what I can do more than I already do. I work for my children ; I go without all the comforts I have been used to ; I have no maid ; and I must refuse going to Lady Westhope’s to-morrow night, because the nursery-maid cannot dress my hair, and because I have no gown fit to appear in.”

“ I am very, very sorry I have not the means of providing you with the luxuries you regret, and I am very sorry you refuse yourself the pleasures and amusements that so naturally fall in your way. I had hoped that at Brighton, where people may join in society without much expense, and where it is not necessary to keep a carriage, you might have mixed with your friends. I should have thought the art of hair-dressing was not so very difficult to acquire, when one sees

every attorney's daughter, every milliner's apprentice, every shop-girl, with hair which puts to shame all the exertions of M. Hippolite."

"I am not a shop-girl or a milliner's apprentice", answered Lady Blanche, while all the blood of the Falkinghams mounted to her cheek, and all the spirit of an ancient race flashed from her eye.

"But you are the wife of a poor man, although of one as nobly born as yourself!" and all the pride of the De Moltons rendered the brow of her husband absolutely awful.

"I know full well that I am the wife of a poor man; there is no need to remind me so often of that truth," replied Lady Blanche, with some bitterness in her tone; "and therefore I shall stay at home, and not expose my poverty to the eyes of the pitying world, or to the sneers of a Mr. Stapleford."

"You will do as is most agreeable to yourself. I shall certainly go to Lady Westhope's, as I shall feel sincere pleasure in seeing my old friends again."

To Lady Westhope's went De Molton; and Blanche stayed at home. She had originally intended, for the sake of enjoying agreeable society, to brave the slight mortification of not finding herself, as was once the case, the best dressed woman in the room; but the conversation of the preceding evening had left her so unhappy, so discontented, and so indignant, that she found a certain pleasure in martyrdom. It was, however, only in the eyes of her husband that she wished to enact the martyr; from the world she would fain conceal that she had so misjudged the strength of her own attachment: she meant to persuade others that it was from choice, from bad health, or from any motive rather than the true one, that she persisted in leading a retired life.

But with her candid disposition, and her speaking eyes, it did not require the malicious tact of a Stapleford to read the true state of her feelings. With Lady Westhope, especially, she could not always be on her guard; and to her it was soon only too evident that the love for which she had given up everything else did not repay her for the sacrifices she had made. Lady Westhope began indeed to doubt whether this much-vaunted love had not, when tried in the balance against privations of every sort, been found utterly wanting.

It may be asked, should then Blanche have married Lord

Glenrith? No, certainly; for she was not in love with him. More especially no, for she was at the time in love with another. But we would urge that if affluence without love is insufficient to wedded happiness, so is the most romantic love without those habitual luxuries, and that dispensation from sordid details, which, to persons in a certain situation, may almost be termed the necessaries of life.

Let not those who, valuing the good things of this world, are dazzled into forming an interested marriage, anticipate the delights of sentimental affection, nor be disappointed if one whose situation was the attraction prove destitute of those qualities which were not sought; and let those who are "all for love and the world well lost," keep in mind the latter half of the sentence, and not expect to find both that which they prize, and that which they profess to condemn. Above all, let not those who have an opportunity of uniting in their choice true affection with the enjoyments of those comforts to which they have been accustomed, be induced, by any temptation of rank, wealth, or power, to give up virtuous happiness for heartless splendour.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown;
No traveller ever reach'd that blest abode,
Who found not thorns and briers in his road.

COWPER.

IN her intercourse with the De Moltons, Lady Westhope observed that they seldom addressed each other; and that, in speaking of her husband, Blanche invariably called him Captain De Molton, instead of Frank, as she had formerly done; and that De Molton also, when speaking of his wife, added the title to her name, and even occasionally addressed her as "Lady" Blanche.

These were trifles, but yet they indicated much. Though grieved for her cousin's sake, Lady Westhope's reflections served to reconcile her to her own fate, and to confirm her in her opinion that

Every black must have its white,
And every sweet its sour,

and that true wisdom consists in dwelling on the "sweets" of one's own peculiar lot, and striving to forget the "sour;" and though for herself she would still have chosen Blanche's trials rather than her own, it might be that she knew her own, and was not so well versed in Lady Blanche's. Yet her character was better fitted for Blanche's situation: she had more decision, more strength of mind, more pride, — not worldly pride, but pride of soul to persevere in the path which she had once chalked out for herself.

De Molton had keenly and painfully felt the coolness which had for months, nay almost years, been gradually increasing between them; and he was still more deeply wounded when she nearly confessed, or at least did not deny, her regret at having rejected Lord Glenrith for him. He could have found excuses for anything else. The pride of man, the tenderness of the husband, the sensitiveness of the individual, were all touched in the tenderest point.

"Could this," he thought, "be the same creature who was such a contemner of worldly wealth, so ardent a votary of love in a cottage, such an enthusiast for the pleasures of nature?" Alas! for poor Blanche! it was love in a lodging-house, not love in a cottage, that she had tried; and as to the pleasures of nature, the dusty suburbs of a country town are scarcely "the country" to a person brought up in the midst of an extensive park, in a wild and woody country.

De Molton recollected how, out of consideration for her, he had concealed his own feelings at Paris; how scrupulously he had avoided interfering with the more brilliant prospects which were opening before her; how, far from taking advantage of her unguarded confession of preference, he had banished himself from his native land; how, though hopeless, he had remained constant to her image for three long years; how, when he found her free, he had hastened to throw himself at her feet; how, without murmuring or repining, he gladly endured privations, the same that she did, and thought himself only too well rewarded if she would cheer their humble home with a smile. He thought over all these things, and he felt himself the most injured of men. Did he not deny himself every indulgence? Did he not even refuse himself the satisfaction of asking a friend to share his morsel? — the most galling self-denial enjoined by absolute poverty!

Did not the responsibility of providing for their children weigh upon his mind? Was it not his duty to look forward to the time when education must commence; when boys must be sent to school, when girls must have masters? What parent will set down contented under the notion that his children will not be fitted by manners and education to move in the sphere in which they were born? — None, who are not without that commonest and strongest feeling in all created beings, parental affection — or who are not without the power of reflection! And how were these expenses to be met? How, but by increased economy on their part?

Such were the cares which pressed on De Molton's mind. How much better would it have been had he fairly communicated them all to his wife; had he frankly counselled with her upon the best plan to be pursued; had he openly laid before her his actual income, his actual expenses! But the constitutional reserve to which we have alluded prevented his pursuing this course.

It was most painful to him to refuse any of her wishes, and the very pain it gave him imparted to his manner of doing so a certain harshness which prevented Blanche from entering into his views. Her resistance to his views, or her martyr-like acquiescence in them, rendered him still less communicative, when, perhaps, had he pursued a more open line of conduct, a person who married with such good intentions as she did (though with little knowledge of things as they are) might have been led to suggest the very sacrifices at which she repined when they were demanded as a right.

Each succeeding day seemed to widen the breach between them. This result of a love-match afforded the materials for many a bad jest among some who called themselves their friends, while others saw nothing entertaining in the wreck of happiness to two people possessing many amiable qualities, though neither of them might be faultless. Some pitied Lady Blanche for having such a harsh and ungrateful tyrant for a husband; and some felt for the noble, uncompromising De Molton, whose home was evidently rendered miserable by a wilful, discontented wife. Some predicted a separation: some predicted that, beautiful as was Lady Blanche, and tired as she was of her home, the time would arrive when she would be induced to leave it, for one more brilliant, though less re-

spectable ; — although her manners were now so reserved, so decorous, a few years, and people would see the difference ; a woman who had once loved so passionately, would not remain contented to pass her life from the age of twenty-eight in a state of cold indifference, if not of absolute dislike.

But those who thus prognosticated, proved uninspired prophets. Affection was still deep-rooted in both their hearts. The noxious weeds of petty grievances had choked, but not destroyed, the goodly plant. It still retained sufficient life, when moistened by the waters of affliction, to spring up with renewed vigour, and overcome in its growth the weeds which had almost stifled it.

CHAPTER XIX.

And dearer seems each dawning smile
For having lost its light awhile.

Lalla Rookh.

THE illness of their children first awakened Blanche and De Molton to a knowledge of their real feelings towards each other.

The children caught the measles, a complaint which had at that period proved peculiarly fatal. The eldest girl, who was at that most engaging of all ages, when, without losing the graces of infancy, the mind opens into companionship, became alarmingly ill. In their tender assiduity by the little bed of the sufferer, all feelings of asperity, all feelings of coldness, were quickly forgotten.

Together they watched with intense anxiety, together they listened to the short and frequent cough ; one held the cup of cooling beverage with which the other moistened the parched lips of their child. No ! it is not possible that parents can bend over the sick bed of their first-born, — the creature equally dear to both, — the creature whose first accents of tenderness have been framed to utter their names, — the creature whose first emotions of love have been for them, whose first notions of right and wrong they have together laboured to form ! — no ! they cannot bend over the sick bed of this loved creature, and harbour any recollection of former unkindness. The impression may fade away ; new causes of irritation may sub-

sequently arise ; but, for the time being, surely it is impossible that any but feelings of affection can find a place in their hearts.

With Blanche and De Molton all that had ever passed was utterly wiped away, as, with the sickening dread of hearing their worst fears confirmed, they followed the physician from the sick chamber. They scarcely knew in what terms to couch the dreadful question to which they feared to receive a still more dreadful answer, — that question which is asked in a broken and quivering voice, but sometimes with a faint smile assumed to reassure the questioner, — that question which is oftener put in the form of an assertion, “ You do not think there is any danger.”

“ Why, certainly, our little patient is in a very uncomfortable state,” replied the physician, who considered it his duty to prepare the parents for the event which he thought only too probable.

The false hollow smile faded from the countenance of the agonized father : he knit his brows, and bit his compressed lip, till the blood almost started ; but Blanche, worn out with fatigue and agitation, his poor Blanche, unable to meet this death-blow to her hopes, staggered towards him for support, and the husband mastered the feelings of the father, to sustain her fainting form, to soothe her more overwhelming agonies.

There are sufferings on which it is painful to dwell, — sufferings too real, too true, too common, — sufferings which have been often endured, and which, alas ! many have in store for them, — sufferings which equal in intensity any of which human nature is capable.

For two days and two nights did they watch each varying symptom, count with trembling accuracy the minutes, the seconds, which were passed in undisturbed repose, and listen with painful rapture to the sweet voice, the plaintive and endearing “ papa,” “ mamma,” which the poor child often uttered, when, in the restlessness of illness, she wanted, she knew not what.

How sad and painful an effort was it to veil under a semblance of playfulness the anxiety which consumed them, while they attempted to amuse the infant sufferer ! to tell her childish tales, in a gay tone of voice, while the heart was bursting ! to smooth the brow, to affect a smile ! How often during these

two long days, these two interminable nights, did Blanche reflect upon her folly and her ingratitude! — her folly in not enjoying to the uttermost the happiness which, a few short days before, was within her reach, — her ingratitude to Providence for the blessings till then vouchsafed to her!

A horrible chill ran through her! — perhaps it was this very ingratitude which had deserved so severe a chastisement. How did she now wonder that petty annoyances should have so ruffled her! What to her were now the sneers of Stapleford, the pity of the world, the absence of elegancies, of comforts! Dry bread to eat, a shelter from the weather, and her children once more healthy, now appeared to her the summit of earthly happiness.

De Molton, too, when he beheld his still-loved Blanche bowed down with grief, when he found her once more overflowing with tenderness to himself, wondered how he could ever have imagined her to be estranged from him, and he watched over her as tenderly as over his child.

On the third day the physician perceived a slight improvement. He allowed them to hope; and the revulsion of feeling, the unbounded joy with which this permission was hailed by Blanche, alarmed him by its vehemence. He attempted to qualify his opinion, but it was in vain! — she was allowed to hope; and, stronger than reason, her ardent nature made her jump to the delightful conclusion that her child was safe.

De Molton, fearful of a relapse, tried to subdue her raptures; but no sooner had the physician left the room, than, throwing herself into his arms, she exclaimed, “Our child will live, Frank! I know she will! She will live, and we shall be happy — entirely, perfectly happy! Nothing can ever make me unhappy again!”

Short-sighted mortals! We little know what the next week, the next day, the next hour, the next moment, may have in store for us!

The hopes of Blanche, however, were not doomed on this occasion to be disappointed: the little girl rapidly recovered; the other children had the complaint mildly; and Blanche, indeed, thought herself beyond the reach of misfortune. She felt gratitude, fervent gratitude, to Heaven for its mercies; but affliction had not yet taught her to “rejoice in trembling.” She did not remember how, always, at all times, and in all

places, our happiness is in the hands of an all-wise, all-powerful, but merciful Being, whose chastisements are dealt in pity.

This truth was forced upon her mind when, just as the children were convalescent, she saw her husband become listless and oppressed: she heard him frequently cough, and she felt some alarm on his account.

It had always been a matter of doubt whether a slight rash he had in his boyhood was or was not the measles. He had never remembered this doubt while attending his child, and it was not till he felt unaccountably languid and suffering that he recollected he might possibly have caught the infection.

The suspicion which he then hinted to Blanche shot through her frame with the conviction of impending woe; and when the physician confirmed the fact, the agonizing, but not uncommon dread which often overtakes those in affliction recurred to her mind with increased intensity. Were their sorrows the visitations of an offended Providence, called down upon their devoted heads by their own want of submission to its decrees? — was she unworthy of a happiness which she had failed to value? — was the moment come when her repinings and her discontent were to be requited with a terrible retribution?

Nothing that Doctor A. could utter was capable of reassuring her. She shook her head mournfully, and redoubled her attentions to her husband. When told that “she ought to place more reliance in that Power which had raised her child from a much more desperate state of sickness,” she answered mournfully, “I do not deserve it.”

“We none of us deserve the mercies we meet with,” replied the kind-hearted physician: “if we were dealt with according to our merits, well might we all despair.” For a few moments such arguments would cheer her, but again she would relapse into despondency; and when, after some days, Dr. A. confessed that the pulse was very high — when his tone of encouragement changed to one of consolation and condolence, her spirit completely sunk — hope died away within her bosom.

In what fearful array did her own faults towards him rise up against her! How completely did she forget the little tone of harshness which had once appeared to her to excuse and to justify her in disputing his wishes and opposing his

plans ! She felt she could never do enough to expiate her faults, that a whole life of devotion could scarcely suffice to atone for them ; and, extreme in everything, she now looked upon herself as having been the most sinful of creatures.

De Molton, whose affection had only been suspended, not destroyed, by the coldness he had met with, now, when he found her tender, gentle, and indefatigable, felt for her all, and more than he had ever felt before. One day she had been tending him with even more than her usual solicitude, when he said, “ Thank you, Blanche ; you are a kind and excellent nurse ; and it grieves me when I think to what a dreary home of sickness, penury, and drudgery, I have been the means of bringing you. Without me, you would have been now enjoying the splendour, the brilliancy of your father’s house, even supposing you had never deigned to adorn any of the other happy homes which courted your acceptance. I know that you have suffered much from the privations unavoidable in our situation ; you have at times thought me harsh ; but indeed, my dearest Blanche — my dear, dear wife, you do not know how much it has cost me to refuse you anything on earth.”

“ Oh, Frank ! do not speak in that manner ! I now know how unreasonable, how ungrateful, I have been. Do not talk of what is past. Believe me, you should not agitate yourself.”

“ It will do me good to say what is upon my mind : it is possible I may not recover.”

“ Oh, Frank ! ” She looked at him reproachfully, as if he was unkind in saying what it was so painful to hear.

“ Nay, do not cast at me so frightened and so accusing a glance. I am not so very ill yet ; and anticipating what is possible, will not make it more probable. Dr. A. says there are still hopes.”

“ Oh, Frank ! I cannot bear it ; indeed I cannot ! ”

“ Dearest love, if it should please God to take me from you, you must bear it ; and, what is more, you must exert yourself. You will be left with four young children, and, I am sorry to say, with less than ever to support them and yourself. I have ensured my life ; but that could be but to a small amount, though to the utmost I could succeed in saving. It was this, as I thought, indispensable duty which contributed to render us so very poor.”

“Oh! you were doing everything that was right; and, indeed, if I had known all, I think—I believe—I should have behaved better. I think, if you had told me——”

“I ought to have done so, perhaps. It was a kind of mistaken pride. The whole thing was so distressing to me! I desired so ardently to have been able to gratify every wish of your heart, that my spirit rebelled at being able to gratify none. Still, my sense of duty and of strong necessity made me resolve not to transgress one inch the line of prudence I had marked out for myself. The more your notions seemed unfitted for the fate we had embraced, the more I thought it my bounden duty to resist them, and to impress upon you the plain naked truth of our condition in life. I was wrong; I feel now that I was wrong. I should have made you the partner of my thoughts and plans, as well as of my affections.”

“No, no! it was not you who were to blame: you were all that was admirable; yours was strict, uncompromising rectitude, firmness of mind, everything that was manly and noble; while I!—oh, that I can have so misjudged you!—oh, that I can have so wasted these past years, which I now feel ought to have been years of such unmixed, such unalloyed happiness!”

“Now, when perhaps it is too late!” he added in a low faint voice; then perceiving the expression of her countenance, he added, “but better late than never, my love;” and he held out his hand to her, with a smile half playful, half sad, attempting, as sick people often do, to familiarize their own and the minds of their friends with the idea of a final separation. He drew her hand towards him, and placing the other upon it, he continued with earnestness and solemnity: “We have been both to blame—both of us. When I am gone, do not torment yourself with useless regrets, but remember what I now say—that I am conscious of having been to blame on my part. If I had treated you with entire confidence and openness, I might have won on your generous nature to submit cheerfully to any privations. But I am reserved, I am proud. I am at length aware of these constitutional faults; and I trust, if I should be raised from this bed of sickness—if I should be spared to you, dear Blanche—that I shall in future know my duty better, and that I shall pursue it resolutely, and never again allow pride and reserve to chill our intercourse.”

“Oh, Frank, if we are but spared to each other, in spite of all outward circumstances, we will be so very, very happy ! But we will rejoice in trembling. We are now too well aware how precarious is our happiness, and we shall prize it the more from that very consciousness. We shall learn to be grateful for the sterling blessings we possess.”

“And we shall know, my love, as I do now, that, when we meet death face to face, those points only on which we have done our duty can afford reflections in which there is any comfort, — those alone on which we have failed to perform it can give unmitigated pain !”

“Alas, alas ! how much have I to repent of ! Instead of making your happiness, have I not caused you vexation and disappointment ? Have I always honoured, always obeyed you ? — have I been really a helpmate to you ? Oh, Frank ! forgive me ! Indeed, indeed, I need your forgiveness ; and even that can never reconcile me to myself !”

“Have you already forgotten my injunctions, my love ? Remember what I so earnestly wish to impress upon your mind, — that we have been both to blame, — both.”

“Thank you, my good, kind, beloved husband, — thank you ; and may God in his mercy preserve you to guide my mind, and direct me in the path I should go ! — then I shall never err again.”

“A weak and erring mortal, like yourself, is a poor guide to lean upon, dear Blanche ; we must look within ourselves for the ardent and sincere wish to do what is right, but we must seek from above the strength to perform it. It is easy to know our duty ; the difficulty is to persevere in its performance.”

“I shall be able to persevere, with you to support me !”

He looked upon her with an expression of unutterable tenderness and pity, and pressed her hand in silence.

The more the fear that they might be for ever parted grew upon her, the less could she admit any allusion to it, the more did she cling to the idea that their union was indissoluble.

CHAPTER XX.

Some manne hath good, but chyldren hath he none ;
 Some maune hath both, but he can get none healthe.
 Some hath all three, but up to honour's throne
 Can he not crepe by no manner of stelth.
 To some she sendeth chyldren, riches, welthe,
 Honour, worship, and reverence all his lyfe,
 But yet she pyncheth him with a shrewde wyfe —

Be content

With such reward as Fortune hath you sent.

SIR THOMAS MORE.

DE MOLTON's health remained for some weeks in a most precarious state, during which period they had time and opportunity for opening their whole hearts to each other.

The religious sentiments which, although never before much called forth, were latent in both their bosoms, were more fully developed ; and in sorrow, in fear, and in distress, the communion of feeling and interchange of thought became more complete than in the earlier years of their marriage.

When he recovered — for he did recover, — they found themselves thoroughly, entirely, and reasonably happy. The first time that he came into the drawing-room, when she had arranged his arm-chair by the fire, and drawn the narrow curtains, placed the table close to him, and settled little Emma on a stool at his feet, she looked round with delight, and could not help expressing that she thought the room an exceedingly nice one, and that really a horse-hair sofa was not so very uncomfortable.

“ Take care, Blanche,” replied De Molton, playfully ; “ we must be happy without deceiving ourselves : we must see things as they really are. Do not, because you are glad to see me here, fancy this little room a splendid apartment, or a horse-hair sofa a luxurious seat, lest the moment of disenchantment should come. No, no ! we will be happy in spite of a bad room and wretched furniture ; but we will indulge in no visions.”

“ How right you always are ! All will go well, now you are recovering. Yes, you will at last make me reasonable too : and you will teach me to keep all my feelings, good as well as

bad, under proper controul ! And yet, I do not know how it is, the room does really look different in my eyes ; and I almost think I do not slip off the sofa as much as I used to do !” He smiled at her again ; and she laughed gaily at herself.

As he gradually recovered, some friends were admitted to see him. Lady Westhope rejoiced, not only at the restoration of his health, but at the restoration of confidence between them. Mr. Stapleford pathetically lamented that De Molton should have been taken ill in this horrid nutshell, and asked when they should move to a more habitable part of the town.

“ Not at all,” answered Blanche.

“ You are not in earnest ? What can you find to admire in this apartment, dear Lady Blanche ?”

“ Its cheapness,” replied Blanche resolutely : “ do you not know, Mr. Stapleford, that we are very poor ?”

The courage to utter these few words would spare many persons many moments of doubt, and hesitation, and awkwardness, and many unavailing efforts to make an effect.

Mr. Stapleford bowed with much respect, and a glance, which seemed to say, “ You have made a bad bargain ! with your beauty, thus to have thrown yourself away !”

But his glance met that of Lady Blanche, which seemed to answer, “ I am very poor, but I do not repent my bargain.”

Blanche’s object was no longer to make a decent appearance in the eyes of others, but to render her husband’s home happy. De Molton no longer felt humbled at their poverty, when she no longer seemed affected by it. He candidly detailed his expenditure and his plans : she took great pains to dress her own hair, and soon acquired the proficiency of a Mrs. Jones, or of a milliner’s apprentice ; she gaily sprung into a Brighton fly with a bounding step, and willingly went into any agreeable society that presented itself : and she found that, though no longer the leader of fashion in point of dress, she was handsome and agreeable enough to be equally sought and liked.

In one of her tête-à-têtes with Lady Westhope, they were both exclaiming at the worldliness of some mutual acquaintance, who courted a woman whom no one esteemed or loved ;

whom no one thought either agreeable or handsome, solely on account of her position in the world.

"At least Frank and I have one comfort," exclaimed Blanche, in the corner of whose heart there still lurked a remnant of vanity: "if we are sought, it must be for our intrinsic merits. There can be no interested motive in any attention or kindness that is shown to us; and that is a reflection which puts one in better humour with one's self."

"Yes," answered Lady Westhope; "and if we were so inclined, we might moralize on this subject as well as on more serious ones. 'This is a world of compensations,' as Lady Montreville says she has learned from her old nurse. You remember Milly Roberts, who was always toddling after her lovely children in St. James's Square? It is quite refreshing when one is in London to converse with Milly Roberts, and hear good sense, good feeling, and philosophy uttered so unconsciously. Lady Montreville says she has taught her almost all she knows of right and wrong; and, among other things, that we must not look for perfect happiness in this world, — that the most fortunate are not without their troubles, as she expresses it, nor the most unfortunate without their own peculiar blessings. I have reasoned myself into a very respectable degree of contentment, and I only hope that the sight of you and your husband, as you now are, may not disturb my philosophical, and, I hope I may add, religious view of my own fate, as much as the sight of you three months ago tended to confirm and strengthen it."

Blanche had time to prove that her cheerfulness under privation was not the effort of a moment, but a resolution founded upon principle, and persevered in from the same motive; and De Molton also had time to prove that the tenderness of his wife had softened the sternness which was the only flaw in his character; and to become as gentle as he was firm in the performance of his duty; when an event occurred which prevented their late-acquired virtues from being any longer put to so severe a trial.

By the death of a very rich godfather, De Molton became possessed of a small independence. It was very small; but it enabled him to retire on half-pay, till he might be wanted for the active service of his country, and to take a small cottage

in the immediate vicinity of Cransley, where Blanche was able to realise her preconceived notions of refined poverty and elegant indigence. They kept a cow, and their butter equalled that at Temple Loseley ; their cream was no longer blue milk ; they baked at home ; and instead of a knocker on the door, they had a bell with a respectable countrified sound. They had a garden, a small one certainly ; but its flowers were as bright as those at Cransley, and the primroses decidedly blew a week earlier ! They had a veranda, and it did not darken the room much. In short, they had all appliances and means to boot requisite for real happiness.

They were enabled, while their children were so young, to lay by something to assist in their education as they grew older ; and they began to think that Milly Roberts was wrong, and that some fortunate people were without "their troubles," when Mr. Stapleford paid them a morning visit from Cransley, and enlightened their minds as to the one only point on which their fate might admit of amelioration.

After expressing his astonishment at their not knowing all the innumerable pieces of scandal which he retailed to them ; at their not having read all the new novels of the last spring ; at their not having seen the new actress, heard the last singer, visited the last exhibition, and become intimate with the last brides of the season ; he exclaimed, "Why, dear Lady Blanche, you will let the grass grow over your intellect, as you are letting it grow over the gravel before your door ! One can see by your road and your conversation that Cransley has been uninhabited, and that Lady Westhope has been in London, while you have been in the country, for the last six months !"

"Oh, come and help us, Mr. Stapleford ! we will soon get rid of the weeds out of doors. Emma, fetch the gardening basket ; Henry, bring your old knife ; Arthur, where is my rake ? and Frank, if you will get the roller, we will make our little bit of gravel quite nice before Lady Westhope calls."

"Of course I am *à vos ordres*, Lady Blanche ; but, I assure you, I shall be vastly more useful in polishing your mind than your garden. People who ruralize all the year round, and cannot therefore be *au courant* of what is going on in the world, should never let slip an opportunity of instruction."

"There is some truth in what you say," replied Blanche, as she looked up from her labours, with sparkling eyes, and a complexion dazzling in its brightness from the warmth of the day and the nature of her employment: then shaking back her curls, she bade him seat himself on the bench beneath the young acacia, and tell her "everything, about everybody."

"Well then, Lord D. did not propose, after all, to Miss C.; but set off for Paris, just as the family was on the tiptoe of expectation, thinking every double knock was the peer come to propose in person, and every single knock was a special messenger bearing a written offer of his hand and heart."

"I did not know Miss C. was grown up: does she turn out pretty?"

"Heavens! Lady Blanche, she has been out these two years! and everybody thinks her quite gone off. She was pretty when the duke made such a fuss with her at her first ball; but Mrs. L. thought it an insult to her charms."

"Mrs. L.'s charms! I thought she was so very plain!"

"Plain! why, she has been a beauty these three years. Lady G. betted Captain S. an amber-headed cane, to an ivory fan, that within a month she would talk her into being a beauty: and she did so, in three weeks and two days,—five days within the prescribed period. When once Lady G. had given her a start, she had the ingenuity to keep it. Her portrait now adorns the *Annals*, and the Duke has worn her chains for two years and a half.—But I must not linger here any longer, or I shall be late at dinner. Good morning, dear Lady Blanche; your simplicity is quite piquant, and absolutely refreshes me. You dine at Cransley to-morrow, when I will finish rubbing the rust off your mind."

That evening Lady Blanche remarked to De Molton: "The only little drawback to our perfect happiness is, that certainly one does grow very dull, and very stupid, knowing nothing that goes on in the world! Yet, after all, how much better to be like you, than like Mr. Stapleford! Yes, notwithstanding the grass that has grown over our minds, I do believe ours is the happiest position in life,—that we have the fewest troubles and the greatest number of blessings. I think I may now say with truth, and without enthusiastic nonsense, that we are happier than if we possessed the mines of Golconda. I told you so when we left Sir Frederick Vyneton's villa after our

honeymoon ; and you then declared how happy you should be if I said the same at the end of two years. I could not have said so then ; but I can now, after eight years of marriage."

We need not add that De Molton was indeed perfectly happy, nor that he told his wife he was so.

THE END.

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